FRAMING THE DIALOGUES

How to Read Openings and Closures in Plato



Edited by

Eleni Kaklamanou,
Maria Pavlou,
and Antonis Tsakmakis

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Contents

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Preface

Eleven of the chapters included in this volume are based on papers delivered at the conference titled 'Framing the Dialogues: How to Read Openings and Closures in Plato', held at the University of Cyprus in December 2015. Three of the essays were specifically written for this volume in order to add a broader and more coherent perspective to the complicated and multi-faceted issue of Platonic openings and closures.

Greek personal names and names of places are latinised. Individual Greek words or phrases, as well as *termini technici*, are generally transliterated and italicised, unless the context makes the Greek form more appropriate. Abbreviations of the names and works of ancient authors are cited according to the list in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Journals are cited according to the abbreviations in the *American Journal of Archaeology*.

We would like to express our gratitude to the anonymous reader for his/her astute comments and constructive criticisms. Warm thanks are also due to the editors of Brill's Plato Studies Series for their support and editorial advice.

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- 978-90-04-44399-0

Introduction

Eleni Kaklamanou

Where have you just come from, Socrates? No, don't tell me.
PLATO, *Protagoras* 309a

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It is well known that scrutiny of Plato's first words begins with Proclus' commentary on the *Parmenides*. Proclus asks how we, the readers of a Platonic dialogue, could or should treat the *prooimia* of the dialogues. Proclus supports the view that a reader should first understand the dialogue and then revisit the opening scene, aiming to understand how the philosophical content developed in the main part of the dialogue sheds light on the prelude.[1] It is thanks to Myles Burnyeat that Proclus' approach to the Platonic *prooimia* became part of the contemporary discussion regarding the nature of Plato's first words. As Burnyeat notes:

> So far from the opening scene telling you how to read the philosophy that follows, it is the philosophy that tells you how to read the opening scene. The opera explains the overture, not vice versa. Only when you know the opera, can you 'read' and really savour the overture. But the philosophical content of a Platonic dialogue, unlike its prologue, is not something you can take in at a glance, or even by one or two careful readings. It may require years of philosophical training, experience, and study – as Proclus would most emphatically agree.[2]

The question 'What is a beginning?' could, or should, be rephrased as follows: 'Is there a beginning at all?', 'What is a beginning of a story?' and 'What

1 Procl. *In Prm.* 658.33–659.23; cf. Remes in this volume. In the *Phaedrus* (266d7) Socrates defines *προοίμιον* as πρῶτον ὡς δεῖ τοῦ λόγου λέγεσθαι ἐν ἀρχῇ. In the *Republic*, *προοίμιον* is used three times: 2.357a1-2, 4.432e6-8, 7.531d7-8. In all three cases, it refers to what the interlocutors have previously said, a prelude to the real question that needs to be discussed. The word is also found in the *Phaedo* 60d2 and the *Timaeus* 29d5.
2 Burnyeat (1997) 4.

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is a beginning of a plot?'. We have to ask ourselves whether a piece of written work, such as a Platonic dialogue, actually begins with its very first words; or whether it commences with the beginning of the actual story; or whether its beginning coincides with the beginning of the plot, which is the succession of events that constitutes the narrative.[3] The true paradox with beginnings is that there are never true beginnings, as is noted by various authors in this volume, in view of the fact that the participants in a discussion carry their past with them, and the whole context is determined by preceding events or ideas, known to the reader. A beginning is the entrance into a new succession of events; the participants in a discussion bring something new, mark some kind of progress, and move towards an end. Every single beginning signals an ending, and the other way around. Still, an ending is not necessarily a closure. 'Our tale is now done' says Antony Trollope at the beginning of the last chapter of the *Warden*, and signals the closure of the story. But there are endings that encourage and prompt us to revisit the text and attempt a new reading. Hence, they lead to a 'new' sequence of events in our minds.

In Plato's *Theaetetus*, the accidental meeting of two friends is marked by chance. Terpsion had been looking for Euclides in the Agora, an 'intentional' meeting has been postponed, as an arbitrary and unexpected factor plays a determining role: the encounter with the dying Theaetetus. The event breaks the circle of everyday life and triggers the discussion. Attention is focused on the present as the point where past and future meet, and is rife with the possibility of a dialogue with both. Euclides recalls an encounter with Socrates a long time ago, and the latter's meeting with the youth who was destined to become a great mathematician. The future signals Theaetetus' death. Dramatically speaking, the *Euthyphro* follows the *Theaetetus*, which is part of the set of dialogues that depict the events of Socrates' trial and execution. At the very end of the long discussion on the nature and definition of knowledge, Socrates departs to answer charges at the porch of King Archon. We meet him again, in the *Euthyphro*, this time outside the King Archon' porch waiting for his turn to be tried, and engaged in a discussion with Euthyphro on the nature of piety.

Queries concerning Plato's philosophical endeavour and literary devices arise almost immediately upon commencing to read a Platonic dialogue.

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3 Shklovsky underlines the difference separating the story from the plot. While the pattern of any story imitates the sorts of causal and temporal sequence of events found in real life, the plot transforms story into literary narrative 'through the artistic process of re-arranging, re-representing and explicitly distorting familiar patterns so as to render them strange and wonderful'; see Liveley (2019) 113.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Readers encounter the text and the individual arguments not in isolation, or in abstract, but within a particular context, and through an encounter with a specific person or persons, at a historical time, and in a given place. As Scolnicov says: ‘a platonic dialogue is a real drama with developed characters, personality clashes, in most cases with an elaborated setting, even ostensibly dramatic date’. Yet, he argues: ‘Plato’s dialogues are not just drama *engagés* just as they are not plain philosophical treatises. Although his dialogues deal with ideas *directly*, they are explored not ‘objectively’, but from the points of view of the characters involved in the conversation at each of its stages’.[4]

Scholars acknowledge that the majority of the Platonic dialogues can be divided into two groups regarding their frames: direct and reported dialogues. In the direct dialogues, such as the *Euthyphro*, the *Gorgias* and the *Laches*, we are presented with a conversation between Socrates and an interlocutor (or a succession of interlocutors), without any mediating narrative voice. We, the readers, are in the position of the audience at a live performance: we see Socrates only as a character in the dialogue. In the case of the reported dialogues, the conversation is rendered by a narrator: either Socrates narrates an account of his actions, or a third party narrates an account of Socrates’ actions. For example, in the *Charmides*, the *Lysis* and the *Republic*, Socrates himself is the narrator, while in the *Symposium* and the *Parmenides* the narrators were not actually present at the original conversations. Notably, in the *Parmenides* the story of the encounter of the young Socrates with Parmenides and Zeno was once told by Pythodorus, an eyewitness of the conversation, to Antiphon, and by Antiphon to Cephalus of Clazomenae, who now tells us the story. In these dialogues, the ‘faithful’ narration of the dramatic action is entrusted to the memory of the tellers. Further, the narrator gives the reader additional information to use when reading the dialogue.[5]

The everyday setting of the dialogues is predominant; accidental meetings are events that break the cycle of everyday life and trigger a discussion, as in the case of the *Theaetetus*.[6] The dialogic engagement, marked in the opening, does not occur exclusively within the sphere of philosophical discourse (e.g. *Parmenides*). Rather, the physical and cultural settings and contexts in which the discussion occurs are the settings and contexts of everyday life in Athens.

4 Scolnicov (2016) 5.

5 For the discursive form in Plato, see, among others, McCabe (2006).

6 According to Trivigno (2011) 63: ‘By giving his dialogues an ordinary setting, Plato aims to get his audience to see the relevance of the philosophical conversation to their own ordinary lives, and thereby to show that philosophy is itself rooted in and tied to the ordinary’.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

The *Republic* begins with Adeimantus' group meeting Socrates and Glaucon on the road between Athens and Piraeus, and their subsequent visit to the house of Cephalus. In the *Protagoras*, Socrates accidentally meets an anonymous friend and recounts his encounter with the sophists at Callias' house earlier on that day. The inner frame of the dialogue opens with Hippocrates banging loudly at Socrates' door early in the morning and chatting with him while he is still in bed. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates walks with Phaedrus outside the city walls, and Plato gives colourful descriptions of the scenery as the two interlocutors take leisurely their stroll.

The contrast between philosophical inquiry and the sophistic method and practice is a recurring theme that runs through a number of Platonic dialogues. Socrates finds himself conversing with a sophist (e.g., Protagoras in the *Protagoras*, Hippias in the *Hippias Major* and *Hippias Minor*, Gorgias in the *Gorgias*, Thrasymachus in the *Republic*), or he discusses the views of the sophists, or a particular sophist (Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*), typically at the request of a third party. Often in the prologues, especially in the early dialogues, Plato portrays the typical, wealthy Athenian youth's craving for an education that would allow him to make his mark in Athenian civic life, and his belief that the most likely source for such an education was to be found in the sophists.

Plato skillfully draws characters that intermingle and affect each other in ways that exemplify the philosophical themes of the dialogues (e.g. Phaedrus, Hippocrates). The mundane, or not so mundane, concerns, troubles and anxieties of the characters shape the inner content of the dialogues; the Platonic prologues appear to provide the basis for the following investigations by drawing attention to particular problems and *aporias* without reference to which the discussions that follow can neither be fully understood, nor rendered fruitful. He masterfully knits together delicate wordplay with evocative imagery, literary allusion and poetical references. There is also irony, humour, playfulness and sarcasm. We come across openings with distinctive poetic elements, for example a poetic exchange in the *Lysis*, or the reference to the palinode in the *Phaedrus.* These elements often appear in the closing lines of the dialogues too, while several dialogues incorporate an erotic play into the introductory scenes, which runs through the whole of the dialogue.

Open-ended-ness is a feature of most Platonic dialogues; we are always invited to see the conversation as incomplete, to revisit it, and to start philosophising for ourselves. This is more than obvious in the case of the *Theaetetus* and the *Parmenides*. The *aporiai* raised in the closing scenes are many and multifaceted. As Fowler points out: 'A work … which leaves questions unanswered

- 978-90-04-44399-0

will be "open" to different interpretations and may leave the reader feeling that where the work stops is not really The End'.[7]

The fourteen chapters of this volume focus on the nature, functions, roles, content, understanding and reception of the Platonic frames. There has been no attempt on the part of the editors at unification or an overall thematic approach to the topic. The volume aims to walk hand in hand both with those who are encountering Plato for the first time and desire guidance as they begin the fascinating journey into the Platonic world, and also with those who are reading the dialogues for the second, third, or hundredth time. We believe that all of the essays help to unveil the richness, complexity and multifaceted nature of the Platonic frames, even though a number of unresolved issues and unexamined dialogues still remain. Nevertheless, we hope that this volume is a useful contribution to the discussion on Plato's frames and that it will serve as a new beginning, stimulating new questions and discussion on the topic.

The volume opens with three chapters that look, each from a different perspective, at the nature of the Platonic frames and the literary devices employed there. In 'Where are You Going and Where Have You Come From? The Problem of Beginnings and Endings in Plato', Stephen Halliwell provides a systematic reading of the *Phaedrus* and reveals the complexity and multifaced character of the Platonic openings and endings. Halliwell defends the view that the Platonic openings and endings intercede 'between the contingency of life and philosophy's quest for unity of meaning' in ways which are resistant to 'closed' form. By understanding the complex relationship between discursive form and the activity of philosophy, at the end of the day, we, as Plato's readers, are confronted with our own conception of, and relation to philosophy.

In 'Frame and Frame-Breaking in Plato's Dialogues', Margalit Finkelberg focusses on the narratological concept of metalepsis, or framing breaking, 'a narratological concept relating to the literary strategy of transgressing the boundaries between different levels of narrative'. The term metalepsis was coined by Gérard Genette in the fifth chapter of his *Discours du récit* (1972). Finkelberg examines different cases of it in several dialogues and argues that in the Platonic corpus we mostly come across the so-called 'rhetorical type' of metalepsis, namely the case in which we are transferred to a different narrative level, but the flow of the narrative is resumed without any delay. Hence, metalepsis in the Platonic dialogues overcomes and 'breaks the boundary between the narrative frame and the framed story, leaving the overall fictional edifice intact'.

7 Fowler (1989) 79.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

In ‘Paradoxical Proems: On the Relationship Between διήγησις and μίμησις in Plato’s Dialogues’, Carlotta Capuccino argues that far from being merely the fine creations of a great writer, Platonic openings and introductory scenes are much more nuanced and significant. They contain a crafty allusion to the meaning of Plato’s dialectical writing and his authorial anonymity. There is a particular group of six dialogues (*Protagoras*, *Euthydemus*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus*) with both an outer and an inner frame. This is paradoxical, according to the author, because the outer frame is set in a place and at a time other than the place and time the actual dialogue took place. Further, it often takes place between different interlocutors, as is the case in the *Theaetetus.* These skillfully constructed paradoxical proems contain allusions to Plato’s view on what is the desirable style, between διήγησις and μίμησις, for good philosophical writing.

The three subsequent chapters are concerned with the so-called Socratic dialogues. Starting with *Charmides*, Luc Brisson in ‘The prologue of the *Charmides*’, examines one of the most beautiful Platonic prologues, which shows, probably more than any other, the mastery of Plato both as a philosopher and a writer. Brisson delivers a close reading of the prologue (153a-158e) in order to show that the central theme of the dialogue, ‘care of the soul leading to σωφροσύνη, understood as mastery on every level, including sexual’ is announced there.

Along the same lines, in ‘Elenctic *Aporia* and Performative *Euporia*: Literary Form and Philosophical Message’, Michael Erler addresses the question of the relation between argument and form in Platonic dialogues, especially in the aporetic dialogues, such as the *Euthyphro* and *Protagoras*. He claims that it is not possible to separate Plato the philosopher from Plato the author. An appreciation of both aspects provides us the keys to unlock a Platonic dialogue. The frames, the historical settings, the fictive chronology, the performance of the characters, often provide the signs or information needed for a better understanding of the conversation between Socrates and his interlocutors. Erler argues that a close reading of the endings of the dialogues unfolds Plato’s strategy: he offers certain cues to the readers that prove useful to continue the philosophical inquiry. The author suggests that dialogues like the *Euthyphro* do end, but do not conclude; their endings open up and reveal a variety of perspectives. It is worth reading the aporetic dialogues again and again reconsidering the themes discussed, since *aporia* plays a positive role in the inquiry.

In ‘Leisure, Philosophy and Teaching in the *Protagoras*’, Maria Pavlou revisits and offers a fresh reading of the well-commented upon opening scene of the *Protagoras*, both the outer and the inner frame, with focus on the notion of ‘leisure’ (σχολή) and its role in philosophy and teaching. This reading reminds

- 978-90-04-44399-0

us of the famous digression in the *Theaetetus*, and the role and significance of leisure in teaching philosophy and in living a philosophical life. Pavlou argues that although the binary opposition between σχολή and ἀσχολία is not explicitly thematised in the *Protagoras*, it runs through it as an undercurrent, and it is actualised in the figures of Socrates, a practitioner of philosophy, and Protagoras, a sophist. Both the inner and the outer frames, as the author argues, 'provoke reflection and are essential to a better understanding, if not of the philosophical subject of virtue, then of the importance of "slowness" in philosophy'.

Chapter 7 is a contribution on the *Republic*. Panagiotis Thanassas in 'Justice as Happiness: *Republic* and its Proems', a title with specific connotations, opens his discussion with the diametrically different readings of the role of Platonic prologues by M. Burnyeat (1997) and Th. Ebert (2002). In contrast to Burnyeat's well known reading, Ebert argues in favour of the view that no feature of the famous opening scene of the *Republic* could, or should, be explained by a later passage. Thanassas asserts that both interpretive strategies represent two diametrically opposed misconceptions of the hermeneutic relationship between parts and whole. Hence, in order to understand the multiple and multifaceted beginnings in the *Republic*, we should consider the relation between a dialogue and its proem as a relationship between whole and part. Following a thorough analysis of the first scene, the first book, and the first part, he concludes that 'the aim of the *Republic* is not the construction of a political program (albeit utopian) or of an ideal political organisation, its topic, as clearly shown in the proem, is justice in the soul as the harmonisation of our internal contradictions in a way that allows us to achieve the highest good – individual happiness'.

The subsequent two chapters are concerned with Plato's erotic dialogues. Andrea Capra's chapter '*Eros* from Plato to comedy. The *Lysis* and the early reception of Plato's beginnings' is a fascinating journey into the world of Plato's erotic dialogues: *Lysis*, *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*. The proximity of the dialogues and their great debt to the poetic tradition is noticeably reflected as early as the fourth century B.C. in Alexis' *Phaedrus*, where the author makes a playful allusion to Plato's homonymous dialogue while, at the same time, we can trace elements and features found in the *Symposium.* Further, Capra argues that Alexis' *Phaedrus* draws upon and echoes the beginning of the *Lysis.* Therefore, it is not unreasonable to claim that it is most likely the first example in the history of the literary reception of Plato's openings.

In 'Eros in the Platonic Frame', Kathryn Morgan examines manifestations of Athenian erotic culture in the beginnings of a series of dialogues, especially the *Lysis*, *Charmides*, *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, in order to show that desire is the context of the philosophical inquiry. The opening scenes reflect the multiple role of Socrates as a lover and an object of love, but also as an educator

and an intellectual facilitator. Erotic role-playing or flirtation, which we find at the beginnings of these dialogues, allows Socrates to consider and reflect upon 'uncomfortable' truths, and, at the end of the day, flirt with philosophy.

In ' "Were You There Yourself?" The "Dialectics of The Body" in Plato's *Phaedo*', Zacharoula Petraki offers a new reading of one of the most well-known and discussed frames in the Platonic corpus. She suggests that the opening narrative frame of the *Phaedo* celebrates the triumph of the eternal philosophical discourse over the particular and perishable human body, and its ending imagines Socrates as overcoming the limitations of bodily form.

In 'The Necessity of Writing: The Introduction of Plato's *Theaetetus*', Antonis Tsakmakis revisits one of the most discussed Platonic frames, the beginning of the *Theaetetus*. He draws upon both the outer and inner frames in order to prove the inextricable link between the prologue and the main part of the dialogue. The issue of philosophy and teaching is at the heart of the discussion. Of great significance for the author is the aporetic nature of the dialogue, in contrast to the other dialogues of the same period. The main argument is that the *Theaetetus* is, rather, concerned with the dialectical method, and the exercise of philosophy than with the philosophical content itself. Plato's interlocutors and audience are part of an education process. As the author says 'the text constructs an ideal reader and an ideal setting for its intended (original) reception. This reader is familiar with Plato's life, work and thought, aware of the requirements of the study of philosophy, and willing to follow this path'.

In 'Chance Encounters and Abrupt Endings: On the Preludes and Closures of Plato's Third Thrasyllan Tetralogy', Spyridon Rangos addresses the question of the unity of the third Thrasyllan tetralogy (*Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, *Philebus* and *Parmenides*) and attempts to understand the relations between the preludes and the philosophical views contained in the main parts. Although the four dialogues are, at first sight, very different, the author shows that their openings and endings, if seen only in the light of the main philosophical discussions, narrate and celebrate the story and life of Socrates the philosopher, who, during his entire life, was preoccupied with the same issues 'about the essential gist of ever-changing reality'. This Socrates, Rangos concludes, 'may well have been Plato'.

Along the same lines, David Horan in 'The Introduction of Plato's *Parmenides*: What Does it introduce and to Whom?' concentrates on the *Parmenides* and addresses a series of questions on the content, role and significance of the prologue, which is elaborately embedded in the main dialogue. The prologue has a crucial part to play in unveiling the ways in which the reader of the dialogue should engage with the other parts. Two of the main concerns are Plato's intended audience and what he wished to communicate to them. As

elsewhere, *Parmenides*' prologue is another intriguing and fascinating way for Plato to prepare his readers for the exercise and practice of philosophy.

The volume reaches an end (but not a closure) with a chapter that revisits what had first initiated the discussion of Plato's openings: Proclus' hermeneutic attitudes towards *prooimia*. In 'The *Prooimion* and the *Skopos*: Proclus' Commentary of the *Alcibiades* I', Pauliina Remes focusses on the Neoplatonic attitude towards *prooimia* with special attention to *skopos*, as the understanding of a preamble is tied to the interpretation of the overall theme or goal of the dialogue. A s*kopos* governs the totality of the dialogue and not merely a part thereof. Proclus insists on the organic unity of the dialogue, reminiscent of the Platonic *Phaedrus* (264c). Further, Remes examines Proclus' interpretation of the preamble of the *Alcibiades* I. Although not the longest or the most interesting of Plato's preambles, the *skopos* of this dialogue is established in the very first sentences of the commentary: the subject is self-knowledge.

One of the main strands of this volume is the admission that the openings and endings of the dialogues are part of the project that the author and philosopher Plato regards as philosophy. It is our hope that the fourteen essays presented here offer some insight and contribute to the deeper and broader understanding of the nature and role of Platonic frames, stimulating new discussions and questions on the matter. Let me close this short introduction with a succinct quotation from John Dillon, which encapsulates this approach: 'the platonic dialogue, after all, is designed to advance philosophical positions aporetically and philosophically, not dogmatically. If we derive doctrines from them it is, so to speak, at our own risk'.[8]

8 Dillon (2019) 7. Sincere thanks to the participants and the audience at the conference 'Framing the Dialogues: How to Read Openings and Closures in Plato', held at the University of Cyprus in December 2015. I would like also to thank Peter Larsen and Antonis Petrides for their insightful comments on the nature of Plato's prologues.

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CHAPTER 1

'Where Are You Going and Where Have You Come From?'

The Problem of Beginnings and Endings in Plato

Stephen Halliwell

ὦ φίλε Φαῖδρε, ποῖ δὴ καὶ πόθεν; ('My dear Phaedrus, where are you going and where have you come from?') The first words of Plato's *Phaedrus* blur their own status as a beginning by conjuring up the idea of something that has preceded them, the idea of a life that has to be imagined as, in a certain sense, existing prior to and 'outside' the text. They are also both superficially simple – a question, at first glance, that anyone might ask anyone else in a chance encounter – and yet charged with potential philosophical significance: symbolic, we could say, of a concern with the 'direction' of a life. First appearances may, in fact, be partly deceptive. There is some reason to suppose that Socrates' double question was not a common one in ordinary speech, as opposed to a combination of interrogatives which were separately commonplace. As it happens, the double question appears in only six other places in surviving Greek: once in Plato's own *Lysis*, where Hippothales asks Socrates the same question (is the young man teasingly adopting a quasi-Socratic manner?); once in an early-imperial epigram by Ammianus which sarcastically treats the question as part of a repertoire of philosophical speech mannerisms; once in a quasi-Platonic introductory narrative in pseudo-Lucian; once in a section of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* which quite explicitly alludes to the *Phaedrus*; once in a question put to Diogenes the Cynic by an acquaintance; and once in Simplicius, merely as an example of a composite utterance but in a context where all the examples are philosophically coloured.[1] Not only, then, is every known occurrence

1 See Pl. *Lys*. 203a-b, Ammian. *Anth. Pal.* XI 157, ps.-Lucian, *Dem. Enc.* 1 (notice the *Phaedrus*-like features of a midday setting and Thersagoras' need for a perambulation, περίπατος, as well as the fact that he is carrying round a copy of his latest poem), Heliod. *Aeth*. 2.21.5 (spoken by Calasiris: see Hunter [2012] 13–14 on the passage's clear echoes of Plato), Diog. Laert. 6.59, Simpl. *In Cat*. p. 43.1 *CAG* VIII. On the philosophical symbolism of Socrates' opening question at *Phdr*. 227a, cf. Yunis (2011) 85–86; de Sanctis (2016) 124–127, but none of the commentators cites all the later passages collected above. On the rhythm of the question, see Capra in this volume. Note that Hermias' commentary *In Phdr*. 14.14–15.2 (Lucarini-Moreschini) offers two different readings of Socrates' opening question: one, a far-fetched reference to

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of the double question linked to philosophical speech; almost all the attested uses have some sort of connection to Plato. There is evidence here that some ancient readers of the *Phaedrus* perceived its opening as employing subtle artistry to strike a philosophically resonant note.

Every complete piece of discourse (every *logos*) has, of logical necessity, a beginning and an end: they are the verbal boundaries of its identity. But the beginnings and endings of *logoi* have a more extended sense which can rarely be defined with precision (after all, where does a beginning itself end? and where does the ending begin?) but which may nonetheless be important in the functional economy of the discourse. In this extended, more functional sense, beginnings and endings may be marked or unmarked to various degrees and in various ways. They may conspicuously draw attention to themselves or, at the other extreme, be purposely self-effacing; or even, as with the *Phaedrus* itself on the reading proposed above, manage to do both these things simultaneously. We know that in Greek culture there was a long pre-platonic tradition of self-consciousness about this aspect of discursive form. Odysseus’ question at the start of his long Phaeacian narrative is already emblematic in this respect: τί πρῶτόν τοι ἔπειτα, τί δ᾽ ὑστάτιον καταλέξω; (‘what then should I recount first, what last?’, *Od.* 9.14).[2] Fifth-century rhetoricians theorised such matters, a point to which I shall be returning in connection with Plato’s *Phaedrus*. And we recall the debate about tragic prologues between Aeschylus and Euripides in Aristophanes’ *Frogs* (1119–1247). Any question we pose about the nature or function of a beginning or ending must, in part, be a question of discursive form, the form or structure of a *logos*, though it will almost inevitably be a question about other things as well. For readers of Plato, beginnings and endings provide one instructive way of addressing issues of discursive form more generally. But we should not deceive ourselves into believing that beginnings and endings can in themselves tell or show us how we ought to read Plato’s works. Nothing, in fact, can do that.

The discursive form of Plato’s dialogues cannot be separated from their mimetic status, the fact that they dramatise and narrate imagined worlds: for the most part, a historically recognisable world, though sometimes one that takes us, by sharp contrast, to the furthest reaches of a philosophically speculative imagination. The mimetic status of the dialogues means that their discursive form can always be viewed on two levels: that of a verbal artefact, and that of

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the instability of sensory beauty, the other a more reasonable inference of Socratic concern for the state of Phaedrus’ life. Finally, various scholars hear an echo of the Homeric formula τίς πόθεν εἶς ἀνδρῶν; (‘what man are you and where are you from?’) at the start of *Phdr*.

2 See Hunter (2014).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

an imaginative representation. On the first level, we can ask questions about, for example, narratological technique, style, register, and generic affiliations. But on the second level, the beginnings and endings of the dialogues are also always features of the process by which the representation of a human scene is embodied in language.

My central purpose in this chapter is to contend that we cannot derive from Plato's work, in terms of either theory or practice, a set of definitive principles of discursive form.[3] I shall do so primarily by formulating a double thesis in relation to the *Phaedrus*, a dialogue especially pertinent to the subject of this book in that it contains a series of paradigms – some theorised, some enacted (and some both of these at the same time) – for the beginnings and endings of *logoi*. I wish to argue that the beginnings and endings of Plato's own dialogues manifest a complexity which exceeds Socrates' theorisation of discursive form in the *Phaedrus*, but also that this theorisation itself, when read with full sensitivity to the dynamics of the dialogue as a whole, does not yield an unambiguous account of where a good *logos* should begin or end. It is, I believe, a revealing Platonic (though not Socratic) irony that there is no straightforward way of reading the dialogues' own beginnings and endings – including those of the *Phaedrus* itself – on the basis of the most prominent treatment of discursive form to be found inside Plato's own writings. That irony is related to, and magnified by, the familiar fact that the very dialogue which has most to say about unity of discursive form is one whose own unity has proved to be an exceptionally controversial topic.[4]

Most of what I have to say in this chapter will be directly concerned, then, with various passages in the *Phaedrus* itself. But my treatment of this work needs to be understood within a broader framework which calls for preliminary statement. The beginnings and endings of Platonic dialogues are boundaries between what might be called (in the narratological jargon) intradiegetic and extradiegetic dimensions of the works: between, that is – as we saw in my (deceptively simple) opening example from the *Phaedrus* – the scenario and discourse that unfold 'inside' a dialogue, and the evocation of a world projected 'outside' the work. Plato's handling of these boundaries can be thought of as a series of depictions of ways in which philosophy – overwhelmingly, of course, a Socratic style of philosophy – can find a place in, or at any rate impinge on, the lives of individuals and groups. In very general but nonetheless important terms, I see the beginnings and endings of the dialogues as dramatising the

3 For some subtle thoughts on various aspects of discursive form in Plato, see McCabe (2006).
4 Rutherford (1995) 260–267 offers a shrewd analysis of approaches to the unity of *Phaedrus*; for the continuing debate, see Werner (2012) 236–258, with references to earlier contributions.

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relationship between the contingency of life and the (hoped for) determinacy of philosophy. To put the point more pithily, if one asks in a Socratic spirit where a philosophical dialogue should begin and end, the respective answers must be ‘anywhere’ and ‘nowhere’.[5] And if that is right, then there can be no fixed or definitive principles of discursive form, only an ongoing, open-ended possibility of making a fresh start at philosophising and a commitment to continue the process until death itself intervenes – and perhaps even beyond that point, depending on how literally one takes some of Socrates’ speculations about the afterlife.

These claims are borne out by some of the salient features and motifs that we find at the beginnings and ends of Platonic dialogues. Most obviously, it is significant that almost half the undisputedly authentic dialogues begin, like the *Phaedrus*, with a chance encounter, an encounter that is then turned, often but not always by Socrates’ own manipulation of circumstances, into an opportunity for reflective enquiry of a kind which soon throws up philosophical concerns. This can take place in either dramatic form, as with e.g. *Euthyphro* or *Ion*, or in narrative, as with *Charmides*, *Lysis*, or the *Republic*, and in either a framing conversation, as with *Parmenides*, or in an inset scene, as with Euclides’ reconstructed dialogue in *Theaetetus*. This last case, when one puts the framing conversation together with the remembered scene, is one of the most powerful of all Platonic beginnings, since it invites readers, as I have argued elsewhere, to imagine a fateful synchrony – the death of Theaetetus taking place, offstage so to speak, during the actual recitation of Euclides’ dialogue of Socrates’ encounter with *young* Theaetetus.[6]

Among writers of Socratic dialogues, chance encounters were not unique to Plato. We can see, for instance, that Aeschines of Sphettus may have favoured such openings, to judge at any rate by his *Alcibiades* and *Miltiades*: the former started with Socrates and others sitting in conversation in the Lyceum, the latter (in a manner somewhat reminiscent of Plato’s *Republic*) with the great Panathenaea as the temporal setting (which it is also in the inset of Plato’s *Parmenides* and in Xenophon’s *Symposium*) and a conversation underway in the agora (with Euripides, incidentally, in the company of Socrates), in both cases using the arrival of a new character as a prompt for the conversation to follow.[7]

5 At the start of *Phaedrus* Socrates himself does not indicate where he has been (though he is outside his normal haunts, 230c-d) or where he is going, but, once given the opportunity to pursue a discussion of *logoi* with Phaedrus, conceives a strong desire to follow the latter as far as is necessary to investigate what matters to him (227d, 230d-e).

6 See Halliwell (2009) 15–17.

7 Aeschin. Socr. *SSR* VI A 43 and 76.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

We cannot be sure just how far Aeschines elaborated the circumstantial details of such openings; the cases cited above do, however, create some suspicion that he employed the device in a rather cursory form. But even given the limitations of our evidence, we can be virtually certain that no other writer of Socratic dialogues, Aeschines included, lavished as much care as Plato often did on giving real force to the circumstantial contingency in which philosophical conversations can arise. Certainly, let me just add, Xenophon did not: he is attracted to first-person authorial incipits of a kind which are anathema to Plato.

Related to the depiction of chance encounters is a repertoire of Platonic techniques, both dramatic and narrative, for cutting into an ongoing scene. These are techniques, it is worth mentioning, whose broad affinities are with comic drama. The openings of Aristophanes' surviving plays readily make use of, for instance, someone impatiently awaiting the belated start of a meeting (*Acharnians*, *Lysistrata*), a character's episode of insomnia (*Clouds*, where the presence of one character awake and one asleep might remind one obliquely of Plato's *Crito*), or characters in mid-journey (*Birds*, *Thesmophoriazusae*, *Frogs*); a contrast with the typically formal prologue-type openings of most tragedies does not need to be dwelt on. The frame dialogue of the *Symposium* actually begins in mid-conversation (between Apollodorus and his interlocutors), a technique easily paralleled at the beginning of comedies (Aristophanes' *Frogs* and Menander's *Dyscolus* are two obvious instances, though in the latter case after a separate formal prologue) or at the start of individual comic scenes. As for the work's inset or embedded narrative, though it supposedly recounts a story 'from the beginning' (ἐξ ἀρχῆς, *Symp*. 174a), that beginning is itself off centre, so to speak. It starts from a chance encounter in the street between Aristodemus and Socrates (an encounter which Socrates, not without embarrassment to his friend, turns into a new improvised piece of action), since it was only from that juncture that Aristodemus was subsequently in a position to supply his first-hand account.[8]

The *Symposium* illustrates a further and related point. It is a corollary of the contingent circumstances at the start of many dialogues that there is a general avoidance of what can be called event-frames, that is types of event which bring with them their own protocols or expectations of beginning and ending. In the *Symposium*, the party at Agathon's house could in principle have provided such an event-frame for the inset narrative, by running from the arrival to the departure of the guests: this is precisely how Xenophon sets up the party

8 Different examples of dialogues which start 'in medias res', cutting into an ongoing event, are *Laches* and *Cratylus*.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

as an event-frame in his own *Symposium*. But Plato’s work flagrantly eschews this neat option, and in the process orientates its narrative perspective more subtly by cutting across the boundaries of the event. This angled perspective makes Socrates arrive late (as he does also, though without explanation, in the different circumstances of the *Gorgias*) – but not casually late, since the delay results, of course, from a piece of bizarre but highly significant behaviour, his ‘doorway trance’. And in the closing section, it both creates a sense that the party does not so much finish as fade out untidily, and allows the narrative to spill over the party frame into a new day and a statement of Socrates’ return to the Lyceum, with all that this implies about the continuation of his daily habits. In retrospect, the dialogue’s own lack of tidily bounded form mirrors the implication that no event or its ‘timetable’ is important enough to constrain the demands of Socrates’ philosophical life.

Strikingly, the two dialogues which come closest to employing chronological event-frames are both related to the end of Socrates’ life. The first is *Crito*’s dramatisation of Socrates’ penultimate day in prison, though here too there is an avoidance of neat balance: the beginning blurs the intradiegetic/extradiegetic boundary in a unique (and moving) manner with the analepsis of Crito’s arrival before dawn, while Socrates is still asleep, and the ending is not that of the day itself but, on the contrary, the rather abrupt and peremptory halt which is produced by Socrates’ uncharacteristic announcement that he is not prepared even to listen to any further objections to the imperatives of his own inner voice (here impersonating the laws of the city). More decisive as a temporal event-frame is, of course, Socrates’ final day in the *Phaedo*. But the sharply defined trajectory from his friends’ early morning arrival to the closure of death itself is, of necessity, unique and unrepeatable.

One might note here that the use of even an ordinary day as the timeframe for a dialogue would have been a readily available option for the author of a Socratic dialogue. But the one case where Plato shows awareness of this option, in the *Lysis*, actually serves to foreground his tendency to avoid strong final resolution. When the slave *paidagogoi* arrive to take home Lysis and Menexenus, the result is not neat closure but a scene of rowdy confrontation (223a). So the day’s ‘natural’ end interferes awkwardly with the state of the argument, the breakup of the conversation is unsatisfactory all-round, and we are left with Socratic *aporia* as well as a slightly enigmatic hint of an aborted desire to start a separate conversation with an unnamed person. A state(ment) of *aporia* is, it goes without saying, the most common way in which closure is avoided or thwarted at the ends of dialogues, but this motif, like everything in Plato’s repertoire, comes with several variants: it can, among other things, be combined with a gesture of deferral (whether on someone else’s part, e.g. Euthyphro’s, or

sometimes on Socrates' part, as in *Protagoras*, *Cratylus* or *Philebus*); it can be accompanied by an arrangement for a further meeting, as in *Laches* ('tomorrow', 201c); or it can be left suspended in some other way, as a mark of incompleteness (as in *Meno* or *Theaetetus*).

These cursory references are meant to lend just basic support to the thesis that an aversion to strong closure at the ends of the dialogues complements a Platonic penchant for contingent beginnings. That is not, for sure, the whole story. There are also dialogues which begin with dialectical immediacy (as with *Meno*, *Philebus* and *Laws*, or, somewhat differently, given their positions in a connected trilogy, *Sophist* and *Politicus*), as well as those which do end with some degree of argumentative closure (*Sophist*, *Politicus* and *Parmenides* are all important in this respect), or, equally, those which end with a kind of silence (including *Gorgias* and *Republic*, where grand mythical vistas are left unanswered within the human conversation itself). But despite those qualifications, it remains the case that the majority of Plato's dialogues deliberately avoid closed form.[9]

One helpful way of throwing that claim into relief is to observe that Platonic dialogues generally fail to conform to the 'logic' of tightly bounded form codified by Aristotle's famous rubric of 'beginning, middle, and end' in the *Poetics*.[10] In one respect, to which I shall return, that claim may seem somewhat ironic when one considers that the Aristotelian rubric may itself have been influenced by passages in Plato's *Phaedrus* which are usually thought to contain an authentically Platonic theory of unified discursive form. Be that influence as it may, the priorities built into Aristotle's formula are very different from those of Plato's writerly practices. Aristotle's attempt to reduce the idea of dramatic/narrative unity to a statement of causal-cum-logical stringency is not unproblematic in its own terms.[11] But what matters for my purposes is that the *Poetics*' 'beginning, middle, end' formula evidently seeks to minimise the 'before' and 'after' of a dramatic or narrative structure, whereas Platonic dialogues, as I have been illustrating, have their own reasons for often doing something rather different from that.

With those preliminary remarks in place, I want to concentrate for the remainder of my chapter on the *Phaedrus*. As indicated near the outset of this chapter, the *Phaedrus* represents a special challenge for any interpretation of openings and endings in Plato. It is the only dialogue in which questions of

9 Cf. Clay (2000) 165–176, though some of his claims require adjustment.

10 For the double occurrence of the rubric, with its contexts, see *Poet.* 7.1450b21-51a6, 23.1459a17-24.

11 Halliwell (2013) contains some further thoughts on this issue.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

discursive form and unity, including the function of beginnings and endings, provide part of the work’s own theoretical subject-matter. In addition, the embedding within the dialogue of three complete set-piece *logoi* on related themes makes it possible to compare their own structures, by a kind of recursive process, with the tenets and prescriptions which emerge from Socrates’ and Phaedrus’ explicit discussions of discursive form. Finally, we can, so to speak, ‘test’ the dialogue itself against the views on, and models of, discursive form which it contains.

Such matters need to be approached open-mindedly. Yet since at least Proclus it has been conventional, at any rate for those who read the dialogues doctrinally, to presuppose that we can extract from the *Phaedrus* a set of principles of discursive form which must mirror Plato’s own practice. Proclus himself uses the *Phaedrus* in this way in his commentaries on both the *Republic* and the *Parmenides*: in the former, he makes it one of his canonical hermeneutic aims to show how the work’s doctrinal consistency matches the *Phaedrus*’ comparison of unified discourse to the organic structure of an animal’s body, and in the commentary on *Parmenides* he refers to the same passage of *Phaedrus* to reinforce his specific claim that the dialogues’ beginnings (which he calls προοίμια, a term we will meet in the *Phaedrus* itself) make an integral contribution to their unity, since they contain symbolic signals of the works’ doctrinal themes.[12]

From one point of view, the rationale for seeking consistency between the theory and practice of discursive form in the *Phaedrus* looks inescapable. After all, Socrates introduces his organic model as part of an attempt to establish principles for all good writing (what he calls at 258d, with a comprehensive formulation, ὁ τρόπος τοῦ καλῶς τε καὶ μὴ γράφειν, ‘the manner of writing well or badly’), a point he underscores by stressing the applicability of the question to written works both public and private, in verse or in prose. Nor does his underlying concern with rhetoric deflect him from this attempt: at 261a he explicitly extends the concept of rhetoric, ‘rhetoric in its entirety’ (τὸ μὲν ὅλον ἡ ῥητορική), beyond forensic and political speech-making to cover private conversations, and therefore by implication his own discussion with Phaedrus. So Socrates’ formal principles necessarily constitute a self-inclusive component of the dialogue in which they occur. But once we start to read more closely,

12 Procl. *In R.* 1.6.24-1.7.1, *In Prm.* 659.12-18; cf. Radke (2006) 151–154, in the context of a reactionary attempt to justify a neoplatonic hermeneutics. Burnyeat (1997) takes his cue from Proclus in developing his own stimulating thoughts on Platonic openings, though I find his treatment of details strained in several places. Capuccino (2014) 10–23 surveys approaches to Platonic openings from Proclus to recent scholarship.

things start to look less transparent. In order to pursue this point, I shall comment selectively on each of the *Phaedrus*' three embedded *logoi* in turn.

The speech of Lysias is criticised by Socrates for having in some sense begun with what should have been its ending (ἀπὸ τελευτῆς) and having then 'swum backwards upstream' (ἐξ ὑπτίας ἀνάπαλιν διανεῖν, 264a). The speaker, he suggests, failed to begin from a knowledge-based definition of his subject arrived at on the basis of a systematic process of conceptual division (ὁδῷ διῃρῆσθαι, 263b), and failed therefore to make the whole speech a structured following-through (συνταξάμενος … διεπεράνατο) from its starting-point (263e). But if we test this complaint for ourselves, as critical readers can be expected to, we might want partially to defend Lysias' speech by pointing out that it displays a type of opening used by Plato himself, as already mentioned, in a number of dialogues: one in which a slight element of analepsis creates the dramatic impression that we are cutting into an ongoing flow of conversation.[13] An exercise in private advice-giving is indeed what we are dealing with in this instance, despite the (supposedly) Lysianic authorship, rather than a purported specimen of a standard rhetorical genre such as the bouleutic oratory to which Socrates' own first speech will make more obvious gestures. This is a matter of something more like a Bakhtinian 'speech-genre', if a calculatedly paradoxical example of one, than a piece of formal oratory, and this feature is pointedly reflected in the open-endedness of its start and its conclusion.[14]

It is also far from clear what Socrates means by saying that the speech 'swims backwards', since its opening functions as the announcement of a thesis for which the speaker then attempts to supply supporting reasons, whether or not good ones. What is more, Plato's dialogues themselves, including the *Phaedrus*, rarely if ever start from an explicit definition of a key concept, let alone one already arrived at by a diairetic method: on the contrary, many of them create their forward momentum by identifying the lack of such a definition and then going in search of it, often of course without determinate results. And we can add a matching point about the end of Lysias' speech, even though Socrates himself does not comment on this. The speech concludes not with definitive resolution but with anticipation of the possibility of further discussion, and

13 One might specifically recall the way in which *Philebus* begins with the summary of a preceding discussion (11a-c): is that too not swimming back upstream?

14 Lysias' speech will of course be covered *retrospectively* by Socrates' idea of 'rhetoric as a whole', both public and private, at 261a; cf. my text above. For speech-genres, see Bakhtin (1986) 60–102. Advice-seeking and advice-giving are speech-genres which leave their traces in some Platonic dialogues themselves, not least *Laches*; cf. also the pseudo-Platonic *Theages*.

discussion in the form of question-and-answer (234c): not entirely different, then, from the endings of several Platonic dialogues.[15] Ironically, the Lysias of this speech appears to share with much of Plato’s own work a deliberate avoidance of closed form at both the start and end of his discourse.

When we come to Socrates’ first speech, we face an immediate question about exactly how to define its beginning. We might even say that it begins in three stages (237a–c), whose enunciative sequence of invocation, narrative statement, and direct speech happens to conform to the same pattern as the start of both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*: first, that is, an invocation to the Muses; second, a short narrative prelude in a seemingly naive story-telling style (ἦν οὕτω δὴ παῖς, ‘there was once a boy …’ – another instance of a speech-genre, this one the colloquial anecdote)[16] which nonetheless complicates the nature of the speech that follows by ascribing it to a *disingenuous* lover (αἱμύλος); and, finally, the actual words of the (non-)lover, who himself begins with a self-reflexive statement about *how* to begin a deliberative discourse, namely with a knowledge-based definition – a statement almost comically preposterous, one might think, as a strategy of sexual seduction, but one which, as the partial parallel supplied by the start of Agathon’s speech in the *Symposium* helps to suggest, has a certain kind of rhetorical showiness to it.[17] The speaker’s statement of method corresponds to the principle later articulated by Socrates in his own voice when criticising, as we have already seen, the opening of Lysias’ speech (263d-4a). But that only adds a further layer of irony to the construction of the speech: the wily, disingenuous lover ostensibly knows in advance the key philosophical principle of discursive form that Socrates will subsequently espouse. And yet, of course, this is a speech Socrates will soon (if perhaps equivocally) disavow.

There is no easy resolution of these entanglements and complications. And it is worth adding that the *end* of Socrates’ first speech multiplies the strands of

15 It is not clear to me why Yunis (2011) 104, suggesting that ἐρώτα, the final word of the speech (*Phdr*. 234c5), puns on ἔρωτα, thinks this ‘emphasizes epideictic wit at the expense of content’: we can hear the pun, if we wish (it is not, in fact, an especially interesting one), without depriving the ending of a legitimate reference to ongoing discussion.

16 The scholia on Ar. *Vesp*. 1182 cite the start of Socrates’ speech to make a point of this kind.

17 Agathon’s gambit (194e) is ‘I wish first of all to explain how one *should* speak, and then actually to speak [sc. in accordance with that explanation]’ (Ἐγὼ δὲ δὴ βούλομαι πρῶτον μὲν εἰπεῖν ὡς χρή με εἰπεῖν, ἔπειτα εἰπεῖν). Cf. also Diog. Apollon. *VS* 64 B 1 DK, λόγου παντὸς ἀρχόμενον δοκεῖ μοι χρεὼν εἶναι τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀναμφισβήτητον παρέχεσθαι … (‘when beginning every speech, I think one ought to make the beginning something beyond dispute’), noting that at *Phdr*. 263a-d Socrates suggests the particular need for a *logos* to begin with a definition of matters over which ‘we disagree’ (ἀμφισβητοῦμεν).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

the *Phaedrus*' explorations of discursive form. After its conspicuously rhetorical climax, the speech is rounded off by a short resumptive 'paragraph' (ταῦτά τε οὖν χρή, ὦ παῖ, συννοεῖν, 'so these are the points, o boy, which you ought to keep in mind …', 241c), and then, to complement the opening invocation of the Muses, a metrical aphorism:[18] a neatly turned ending, it seems, except that Socrates proceeds to express unhappiness with it, as though he has broken off prematurely ('you'll just have to take that as the end of the speech', ἀλλ' ἤδη σοι τέλος ἐχέτω ὁ λόγος: 241d), and Phaedrus compounds matters by saying that he thought the speech was only halfway through, not at the end. One might here be partially reminded of Eryximachus' claim in the *Symposium* that Pausanias' speech was good as far as it went, but did not go far enough, leaving Eryximachus, as he says, to provide its *telos* himself (*Symp*. 185e-186a). It lies outside my scope here to analyse the subtleties of voice and viewpoint built into Socrates' impersonation of the dissembling speaker in his first speech, but the details I have noted have sufficiently drawn attention to the emergent complexity of the relationship between the theory and practice of discursive form in the *Phaedrus*.

And so to Socrates' second speech, the longest and most elaborate of the three inset *logoi*, self-evidently of a philosophically different order of magnitude from the first two. But even to make that statement of the obvious is already to broach a problem for the theory of discursive form which Socrates will put forward later in the work: how could any single model of form hope to encompass such different things as short conversational speeches advancing reasons for a single proposition, and, on the other hand, a multifarious, multi-generic, multiform discourse which weaves together elements of protreptic, argument, myth, prayer, and more besides into a unique structure of discourse? I shall return later to that larger question but for now will make two main observations on the beginning and ending of this extraordinary piece of writing.

What is most remarkable, for my purposes, about the opening of Socrates' second speech is that it involves an elaborate blurring between the speech itself and the dialogue's surrounding context of conversation.[19] As he prepares to deliver the speech, Socrates invites Phaedrus to step inside the fictional scenario with him (243e-4a), assuming the role of the boy to whom the previous speech was supposedly addressed – a key moment, for sure, in the dialogue's

18 On the metrical question, see Capra (2014) 45–48.

19 Socrates' first speech also breached its own frame by alluding to Phaedrus within the invocation to the Muses at 237a, but that is a more straightforward point than the interlacing of Phaedrus' double identity at 243e-244a.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

own eroticism. So Socrates’ second speech is both a supposedly fictional composition embedded in the dialogue *and* a sort of continuation of the dialogue ‘itself’ by other means. That makes the issue of where to begin, or what counts as a beginning, rather slippery. When, moreover, Socrates formally starts to address the boy/Phaedrus, he does so with a kind of prelude (recall the earlier address to the Muses) which explicitly refers back to ‘the previous speech’ (ὁ πρότερος λόγος), ironically reattributes its authorship to Phaedrus himself, and ascribes the speech about to be delivered to the poet Stesichorus (who, what is more, denies the truth of the earlier speech as if it was one of his own poems). If one calls this a kind of game of verbal mirrors (and no serious reader of *Phaedrus* needs reminding that Socrates will eventually look back on the whole conversation as a kind of ‘play’, παιδιά: 265c), that is not to diminish the importance of the issues at stake in the speech. But there is no escaping from the multiplicity of ‘voices’ sounded by Socrates, nor from the resulting difficulty of hearing a set of supposedly authorial *dogmata* behind them, as many wish to do. Nor, equally, is there any easy way of matching up the start of Socrates’ second speech with the model he later uses in his criticism of Lysias’ speech (263d-4a, already cited), the model which prescribes beginning from a definition and proceeding in some sort of linear sequence from that. Whatever else might be thought about Socrates’ bravura palinode, it does not begin from a clear-cut definition of anything, still less follow an evidently linear sequence of thought.[20] I am not here denying that one can seek unity in Socrates’ second speech, but I *am* denying that such unity could be thought to arise from conformity to a fixed template of discursive form or that the *Phaedrus* itself encourages us to suppose such a thing. Far from manifesting such conformity, the speech illustrates aspects of the discursive complexity which is a general trait of Plato’s writing, including the dialogues’ beginnings and endings.

As for the end of Socrates’ second speech, I will just observe briefly that it has a sort of double or two-level ending (256e-7a). In the voice of the impersonated lover it finishes with a reaffirmation of the blessings of true philosophical *eros*, while, in terms of Socrates’ framing discourse, it offers a prayer to the god Eros for forgiveness and for Lysias’ conversion to philosophy. In that respect, the latter anticipates and matches the end of the whole dialogue, where we have

20 It is true that at 253c Socrates claims that he started (ἐν ἀρχῇ) from the division of parts of soul, i.e. at 246a ff.; but that is an odd way of treating the structure of his speech, which has a substantial prelude at 243e-245c, then turns to what Socrates calls a demonstration (ἀπόδειξις) of the benefits of erotic madness, beginning in turn from a statement of the immortality of the soul.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

the vexed reference to Isocrates and Socrates' prayer for inward beauty. I shall return to this point in due course.

In making these selective remarks on the beginnings and endings of the three 'embedded' *logoi* in the *Phaedrus*, I have tried to show that they open up a far from straightforward or unambiguous perspective on the functional boundaries of discursive form, and that in addition they stand in an asymmetrical relationship to various characteristics of Plato's own writing. Bearing these contentions in mind, it is time now to reexamine the explicit principles of discursive form which Socrates enunciates later in the work and which have been standardly assumed, from antiquity onwards, to represent unequivocally Plato's authorial conception of the ideal discursive form of any well-crafted *logos* (written or spoken), and therefore of his own dialogues too.

I would like first to draw attention to the fact that, having extended the scope of his argument to speaking as well as writing (λέγειν τε καὶ γράφειν, 259e), Socrates links fine discourse to knowledge of truth in 'the mind of the speaker' (τὴν τοῦ λέγοντος διάνοιαν). He thereby appears to posit a direct, unmediated link of expression between author and discourse/'text'. But this is an uncompromisingly *monologic* principle, and one which accordingly makes no allowance for the most basic formal feature of Platonic writing itself. Plato is not 'the speaker' (ὁ λέγων) in his own dialogues. Nor will it do to dismiss this point by saying that Socrates is simply slipping back into operating with a standard rhetorical model of first-person discourse: while Phaedrus, in his response, does indeed use the term ῥήτωρ (public speaker, 260a), it is in this same part of the work, just shortly afterwards, that Socrates underlines his concern, as I mentioned earlier, with an enlarged category of rhetoric – rhetoric 'as a whole' (τὸ ὅλον), as he says, both public and private (261a). If the theory of good discourse which Socrates starts to develop at 259e is as Platonically self-reflexive as usually imagined, it is particularly ironic that the *Phaedrus* itself is so hard to square with a *prima facie* reading of Socrates' injunctions. Three points are fundamental here. The dialogue is evidently far from offering a monologic discourse, especially when we take into account that Socrates ultimately describes even his second speech, for all its seeming seriousness, as a kind of playfulness (265c). Furthermore, the *Phaedrus* blatantly does not begin with, or ever conclusively arrive at, a secure definition of its key terms (*eros*, rhetoric, philosophy). Finally, and *a fortiori*, the dialogue cannot be said to follow through an argument from start to finish in a sequentially organised fashion of the sort presupposed by Socrates' terms at 263d-4a (cited earlier), let alone with the ostensibly iron rigour of what he calls ἀνάγκη λογογραφική, 'discursive necessity' (264b). In short, Platonic practice greatly exceeds in complexity the supposedly unambiguous clarity of Platonic theory.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Consider now Socrates’ formulation of organic unity at 264c, that is, his comparison between a well-constructed λόγος and the self-contained unity of an animal body with head, feet and middle parts. This is a passage which, in conjunction with the later reference to tragedy itself at 268d, may, as mentioned earlier, have influenced Aristotle’s thinking about unity of form in the *Poetics*, though it is actually more likely that the analogy is of a kind that already had some currency before its appearance in Plato.[21] Phaedrus agrees readily to Socrates’ zoological analogy, and indeed he is the one who, prompted by Socrates, echoes its terms in that later reference to tragedy. But just what does the analogy tell us? The principles it embodies are abstract and general, thus compatible with many different actual arrangements of the materials of a speech, as with the similar principles of unity of form (εἶδος) which Socrates posits at *Gorgias* 503d-4a for orators, painters and other craftsmen. For one thing, the generalised terms of the organic analogy, unlike the later reference to tragedy, suggest nothing about the requirements of different genres or types of *logoi*, even though the zoological side of the analogy, whether it refers to an individual animal’s body or its species-type, surely leaves room for such a qualification. Moreover, is it a merely terminological point that in other dialogues (*Gorgias*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus* and *Laws*) the κεφαλή, ‘head’, of a discourse is its *ending*, not its start, as one might have been inclined to take Socrates to mean by it here?[22] When we add the fact that τὸ κεφάλαιον is regularly used to mean ‘the main point’, ‘the most important thing’ (cf., in *Phaedrus* itself, 228d and 267d), we should be prepared to consider that Socrates’ analogy is not a picturesque way of representing a formula of beginning, middle and end, but rather a schematic model in which ‘head’ means the most important element, ‘feet’ means some kind of supporting structure, and ‘middle parts’ encompasses everything else that fills out a discursive form and provides the connections between its components. There remains real uncertainty, at any rate, how to translate the terms of the analogy into concrete judgements about what should come at the start, in the middle or at the end of a unified discourse. (We might recall here, once more, Socrates’ far from incontestable judgement at 264a that Lysias’ speech begins with what ought, in his view, to have been its ending.) Most pertinently, if the organic analogy is understood to suggest ‘closed’ form,

21 Both Socrates’ introduction of the analogy, with its expectation of ready agreement (especially after Phaedrus’ preceding expression of diffidence about judging Lysias’ speech: 264b), and the ready assent to the proposition which Phaedrus does in fact give, point to the preexisting familiarity of such analogies.

22 See *Grg*. 505d, *Phlb*. 66d, *Ti*. 69b, *Leg.* 6.752a (the only Platonic occurrence of the adj. ἀκέφαλος apart from *Phdr*. 264c itself).

as *prima facie* it does, then we are left with an apparent discrepancy between such a normative ideal and the various ways, outlined in the first part of my chapter, in which many Platonic dialogues themselves resist a strong sense of boundedness.

But there is a further twist to take account of; the *Phaedrus* is nothing if not a work of twists and turns. On a, so to speak, innocent first reading, it might be thought that Socrates' model of organic unity, following on as it does from his criticisms of Lysias' randomness and lack of 'discursive necessity' (ἀνάγκη λογογραφική), must be hospitable to – must even demand – a rigorous, rule-based formalism. Yet after Phaedrus has suggested to Socrates that his characterisation of dialectic (i.e. the methods of collection and division used by those whom Socrates wishes to call 'dialecticians', διαλεκτικοί) fails to capture some of the teachings of contemporary rhetorical treatises, Socrates proceeds to mock a whole series of named rhetoricians for the attention they devote to the structural parts of a *logos*, including the proem (προοίμιον, 266d) and conclusion or recapitulation (ἐπάνοδος, 267d). Now, an engaged but sceptical reader might initially wonder what is supposed to be so defective about the terminology and techniques in question, some of which were thought worthy of inclusion by Aristotle in his own teaching in the *Rhetoric* (though Aristotle did also share some of the concerns found in the present passage).[23] And if we focus specifically on the reference to proems and recapitulations, we might ask what is less adequate about the rhetorical theorisation of beginnings and endings, as a matter of formal abstraction, than about Socrates' own analogy with the parts of an animal's body.

It is essential here to separate the conceptual thrust of Socrates' case from the historical question of whether he (or Plato) is being fair to the rhetoricians named: we cannot safely answer this last question without more independent evidence about the handbooks and teachings alluded to. But my concern is with the theoretical implications of Socrates' argument, not with its historical fairness. Socrates' critique of the rhetoricians appears somewhat paradoxical. He complains that they invent separate technical terms and categories which they fail to integrate into a systematic *techne*, even though it is clear, from his own and Phaedrus' testimony, that the same rhetoricians' ideas include rules about the structurally coordinated organisation of speeches, from their beginnings (προοίμια) to their ends (ἐπάνοδοι). How can that be? Either the

23 Aristotle's main remarks on the divisions of speeches are found in *Rh*. 3.13–19, but at *Rh*. 1.1, 1354b16-21 he seems to echo *Phdr*. 266d-269c in criticising writers of handbooks for privileging inessential matters such as divisions of speeches over the essentials of reasoning. Cf. Solmsen (1968) 2.180–182, Rapp (2002) 2.1000-1007.

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rhetoricians fail to follow their own rules or those rules themselves are taken to be mechanically formalistic, concerned with particular procedures that do nothing to make a speech unified at a deeper level. It is true that in his earlier criticism of Lysias' non-lover's speech, Socrates alleged (again, whether fairly or not) a complete *lack* of structural organisation. It is also true that something similar is implied by the analogy he draws with tragedy, where the deluded amateur (imagined by Phaedrus as being mocked by Sophocles and Euripides) is able to create emotional moments of various kinds but lacks the ability to create unified plays (268c-d). Even so, the main thrust of Socrates' argument, with its references to beginnings and ends, cannot be an accusation against the rhetoricians of neglecting the need for principles of discursive form and unity. It must, instead, be alleging that the structural principles they espouse are superficial, not rooted (as he goes on to explain) in a properly philosophical understanding of the subjects that rhetoric purports to deal with.

But if that is right, there may after all be a subtle point of contact between Socrates' theoretical reflections on discursive form and Plato's own practice. That point of contact consists in the refusal to accept that discursive form and unity can be achieved by purely *formalist* or rule-bound procedures. Despite – or alongside – his insistence on the importance of form for a well-made *logos*, Socrates ridicules the idea that form can be reduced to a fixed template, and this stance is at any rate consistent with the self-conscious variations of form found at the beginnings and endings of Plato's dialogues themselves. To look for congruity at this deeper level does not, however, eliminate the numerous *in*congruities to which I earlier drew attention. Indeed, from this very passage on the rhetoricians' shortcomings one can find one more rather glaring example of a discrepancy between what Socrates says and what Plato does. If Socrates (though in an impersonatory voice) earlier laid down a principle for the opening of a *logos* which the *Phaedrus* itself does not observe (namely, the requirement of beginning from a knowledge-based definition), he now appears to deride the rhetoricians for their agreed rule that a *logos* should end with an ἐπάνοδος, a concluding summary or résumé of the main points. Yet this is precisely something which the *Phaedrus* itself does: at 277a-b, from the work's own epilogue, Socrates explicitly reminds Phaedrus of the steps in the preceding argument that have brought them to the point they have reached, i.e. their model of a true, philosophically (in)formed art of rhetoric. There are other Platonic dialogues too (*Crito*, *Ion*, *Philebus*) which incorporate a summary as they draw to a close, though this is by no means a standard, let alone a mechanical, element of the dialogue form. The point is further confirmation, as I see it, that any attempt to align the theory and practice of discursive form

- 978-90-04-44399-0

in *Phaedrus* remains a challenge that cannot be met with a hermeneutics of transparent authorial self-reference.

In view of the anti-doctrinal and partly aporetic line of thought I have followed in this chapter, it will, I hope, seem appropriate if I conclude my own argument in a deliberately open-ended way (and without a 'recapitulation', rhetorical or otherwise). About the final pages of the *Phaedrus* itself, three points deserve to be made, though with extreme brevity: first, that the famous 'critique of writing' is inescapably paradoxical, since the Socrates who utters it is himself a creation of writing; second, that Socrates' reiterated emphasis on the playfulness (278b) of his whole conversation with Phaedrus poses an enigma for readers of the dialogue; third, that the much-debated reference to Isocrates is intrinsically ambivalent, since it retrojects into a fifth-century setting a question about 'the future' whose interpretation is left dependent on a judgement about Isocrates' career which only a fourth-century (or later) reader can make. Between them, these features make the ending of *Phaedrus*, like that of most Platonic dialogues, no real ending at all. The conclusion of the text sends truly engaged readers back into the world, like Socrates and Phaedrus, but ready to make a fresh start in understanding where they have come from and where they might be going. 'Let us go, then'.[24]

24 The final word of the dialogue, ἴωμεν, like its opening question, points to the continuation of a life and a world beyond the completion of the text, making the last word, in a sense, nothing of the kind. ἴωμεν is used three times earlier in the dialogue (229a, 264e, 279b), each time with discernible overtones; cf. Hunter (2012) 14, 197. For a thought-provoking dramatic parallel, note that Samuel Beckett ends both acts of *Waiting for Godot* with 'Let's go' ('Allons-nous-en' in the French version).

CHAPTER 2

Frame and Frame-Breaking in Plato's Dialogues

Margalit Finkelberg

1 Metalepsis in Plato

Metalepsis, or frame-breaking, is a narratological concept relating to the literary strategy of transgressing the boundaries between different levels of narrative.[1] Owing to the pioneering studies of Irene de Jong and Tim Whitmarsh, the use of metalepsis in Greco-Roman literature has recently drawn considerable scholarly attention.[2] In view of this, it comes as a surprise that the application of this narrative strategy by Plato has largely passed unnoticed.[3] This is apparently due to the way in which metalepsis is employed in Plato's dialogues.

The form of metalepsis that is most widespread in modern literary fiction and therefore most frequently discussed in scholarly literature concerns the breaking of artistic illusion issuing from intrusion of the real world into the fictional one, or vice versa; when put into narratological terms, this would amount to breaking the boundary between the extradiegetic and the intradiegetic level of narrative.[4] In equal measure, however, metalepsis can occur between different intradiegetic levels, that is, between the narrative frame and the story it encloses, both of which belong to the narrated world. It goes without saying that such intradiegetic metalepsis can only occur in multi-level narratives. As we shall see, this is precisely the kind of metalepsis that Plato favoured.

1 Cf. Pier (2013) 1.2: 'a paradoxical contamination between the world of the telling and the world of the told'. First identified in Genette (1980 [1972]) 234–237. See also Genette (2004); Pier and Schaeffer (2005); Ryan (2006) 204–211. For a discussion of various types of metalepsis see Fludernik (2003) 382–389.

2 de Jong (2009); Whitmarsh (2013). A conference on 'Metalepsis in Classical Literature' took place in Oxford in September 2015; as far as I know, metalepsis in Plato was not among the subjects discussed.

3 To my knowledge, J.J. Collins has been the only scholar to acknowledge the presence of metalepsis in Plato's *Euthydemus* and *Phaedo* and to discuss its implications; see Collins (2012) 163–173; *id.* (2015) 124–133, and Section 3.2 below. See now also Finkelberg (2019) 22–23.

4 In narratology, the term 'extradiegetic' refers to the narrator and the narrative situation which are positioned outside the narrated world; the term 'intradiegetic' or 'diegetic' is used for designating the narrator and narrative situation which are positioned within the narrated world. See Genette (1980) 228–229.

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But we should also take into account two additional parameters by which metalepsis is approached. Narratologists often draw a distinction between metalepsis on the discourse level, or rhetorical metalepsis, and metalepsis on the story level, also called ontological metalepsis. Marie-Laure Ryan highlights the principles on which the distinction is based: 'Whereas rhetorical metalepsis maintains the levels of the stack distinct from each other, ontological metalepsis opens a passage between levels that results in their interpenetration, or mutual contamination'.[5] Metalepsis that affects the entire story level is generally considered to be a distinctive feature of twentieth-century fiction.[6] Yet, as we shall see, both kinds of metalepsis are attested in Plato.

Finally, Plato's use of a two-tier system of reported speech in the multi-level *Symposium* and *Parmenides* results in the frame narrator permanently intruding into the narrated world. Although not affecting the story level as such, the ensuing intermingling of different narrative voices is not unlike that of 'mutual contamination' characteristic of ontological metalepsis. Unattainable by modern languages and lost in translation, this metaleptic strategy is without parallel in modern fiction and has passed unnoticed as a result.[7]

Metalepsis which involves the extradiegetic level occurs only in the *Charmides* and *Republic* 1, both of them having only one intradiegetic level. Six dialogues in our corpus – the *Protagoras*, the *Euthydemus*, the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, the *Parmenides* and the *Theaetetus* – contain several intradiegetic levels: it is in these dialogues that Plato's use of metalepsis is prominent. Let us approach all the relevant cases one by one.

2 Single-Level Dialogues: Rhetorical Metalepsis. The *Charmides* and *Republic* 1

On three occasions in the *Charmides*, Socrates the narrator directly addresses his undefined narratee ('O my friend!' or 'O my noble friend!'), thereby transgressing the boundary between the extradiegetic and the intradiegetic level of narrative. All of them are exclamations expressing Socrates' excitement at the sight of Charmides' beauty, as for example the following: '*Oh my noble friend*! I caught the sight of the inwards of his garment, and took

5 Ryan (2006) 207. See also Cohn (2005); Pier (2013) 2.1.7.

6 Cf. Ryan (2006) 206: 'Nearly all the metalepses found in literature before the twentieth century belong to the first type [i.e. rhetorical metalepsis]'. Cf. also McHale (1987) 119–124.

7 This is not to say that the effect as such has not been described or commented on; see, e.g., the comments of Halperin and Hunter adduced below (with n. 18).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

the flame, and no longer belonged to myself'.[8] This is equivalent to the practice, widespread in the 18th- and 19th-century novel, of the author/narrator addressing the implied reader directly – as, for example, in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*: '*Gentle reader, may you never feel what I then felt*!' (Ch. 27; my emphasis). In causing the extradiegetic narrative act to intrude into the intradiegetic domain, such apostrophic addresses would qualify as a mild case of rhetorical metalepsis, namely metalepsis which does not affect the story level.[9]

In *Republic* 1, Plato goes several steps further, letting Socrates the narrator to demonstrate the extent of his control over the way in which the story is presented to the audience: 'Thrasymachus agreed on all these points, *not as smoothly as I tell now*, but reluctantly and with great effort, sweating abundantly – for it was summer into the bargain. And then I saw what I had not yet seen before: Thrasymachus blushing'.[10] Socrates' words 'not as smoothly (*rhaidios*) as I tell now', relating to Thrasymachus' reluctant yielding to Socrates' argument, address Socrates' undefined narratee and, ultimately, the implied reader of the dialogue. This indicates that they belong to the extradiegetic level, to the 'now' of the act of narration in which Socrates is involved. Although considerably more sophisticated than what we find in the *Charmides*, this case of metalepsis does not affect the story level either.

As we shall see immediately, most multi-level dialogues also admit this kind of momentarily frame-breaking. Some of them, however, go much farther than that.

3 Multi-Level Dialogues

All multi-level dialogues, to the exclusion of the *Parmenides*, are the so-called mixed dialogues, in that they present a combination of dramatic and narrative form. In the dialogues of this group the first-person narrative, which constitutes the body of the dialogue, is preceded by a dramatic frame, namely a

8 *Chrm*. 155d3-4, my emphasis. See also *Chrm*. 154b8 and 155c5. Unless otherwise indicated, the translations of Plato are by B. Jowett (1892), adapted where necessary.

9 On a metaleptic relation with the reader by means of the second-person pronoun see McHale (1987) 223–225; on the metaleptic potential of apostrophic addresses to the reader see Pier (2013) 3.2.26. The addresses to the reader satisfy the sufficient conditions for metalepsis as recently formulated in Hanebeck (2017) 25, namely that the narrator and the addressee should belong 'to distinct spatiotemporal frames of reference, which results in a fiction-internal paradoxical transgression defying representational logic'.

10 *Resp*. 350c12-d3; my translation and emphasis.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

direct-speech exchange between the prospective narrator and the prospective narratee. The *Parmenides* is thus the only Plato's dialogue in which frame story in the literal sense of the word is found.

The multi-level arrangement is immediately obvious in the case of the *Symposium*, the *Theaetetus* and the *Parmenides*, each featuring a chain of narrators. In the *Symposium* the story of the dinner party in the house of the poet Agathon was once told by Aristodemus, who had been present at the party, to Apollodorus, who now tells this story to a group of friends. In the *Theaetetus* the story of the encounter between Socrates and the young Theaetetus was once told by Socrates to Euclides, who has now arranged for a written version of it to be read aloud before his friend Terpsion. In the *Parmenides* the story of the encounter of the young Socrates with Parmenides and Zeno was once told by Pythodorus, an eyewitness, to Antiphon, and by Antiphon to Cephalus of Clazomenae, who now tells the story to us. In the *Theaetetus*, however, the reported speech of Socrates' narrative is presented as having been deliberately converted into direct speech,[11] so that to all intents and purposes the *Theaetetus* functions as a thoroughly dramatic dialogue, which renders it irrelevant to the present discussion.

In the *Protagoras*, the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo*, all of them featuring a single narrator, the multi-level arrangement is perhaps less obvious. Yet here too, the dramatic frame is firmly positioned within the intradiegetic domain, forming the upper level of the narrative. Thus, in the dramatic frame of the *Protagoras*, an unnamed acquaintance asks Socrates to tell him and his friends about his recent meeting with Protagoras, and Socrates' account of the meeting follows; in the dramatic frame of the *Euthydemus*, Crito asks Socrates to tell him about his recent meeting with Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, and Socrates' account of the meeting follows; in the dramatic frame of the *Phaedo*, Echecrates asks Phaedo to tell him about the circumstances of Socrates' death, and Phaedo's account of the last hours of Socrates follows.

All the multi-level dialogues are metaleptic to one degree or another. Since neither rhetorical metalepsis in the proper sense of the word nor the two-tier system of reported speech, whose metaleptic effect is idiosyncratic to Plato (above), affect the story level, I treat them as two separate cases of metalepsis at discourse level.

11 *Tht.* 143b5-c5. See the discussion in Morgan (2004) 358; Capuccino (2014) 102–191; Kaklamanou and Pavlou (2016); Finkelberg (2019) 97–100.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

3.1 *Metalepsis at Discourse Level*

3.1.1 Rhetorical Metalepsis: the *Protagoras*, the *Symposium*, the *Phaedo*

On three occasions in the *Protagoras* the dramatic frame intrudes into the story-world to produce metalepsis. In his description of the entry of Alcibiades and Critias, Socrates the narrator emphatically re-introduces the dialogue's dramatic frame: 'No sooner had we entered than there followed us Alcibiades the beautiful, *as you say*, *and I believe you*; and Critias the son of Callaeschrus'.[12] Socrates directly addresses his fictional narratee, quoting the remark on Alcibiades made by the latter in the dialogue's dramatic frame,[13] that is, on a different intradiegetic level. The following case of metalepsis is much more subtle: 'Thus I spoke and was rising from my seat, when Callias seized me by the right hand, and in his left hand caught hold *of this old cloak of mine*. He said: 'We cannot let you go, Socrates, for if you depart our discussion (*hoi dialogoi*) will not be the same'.[14] Socrates' emphatic pointing at his cloak not only brings us back to the dramatic frame, that is, to the narrative level on which the fictional act of narration takes place, but also vividly materialises the interpenetration of narrative levels produced thereby. For a moment, the frame and the framed interlock, but narrative flaw resumes almost immediately. As we have seen, such quick re-establishment of the boundaries between the narrative levels is a distinctive characteristic of rhetorical metalepsis.

Finally, when describing his distress at the moment he felt defeated by Protagoras' eloquence, Socrates addresses his narratee in a manner closely similar to what we observed above for the *Charmides*:

> Many of the audience cheered and applauded this. And I felt at first giddy and faint, as if I had received a blow from the hand of an expert boxer, when I heard his words and the sound of the cheering. *To tell you the truth*, I wanted to get time to think what the meaning of the poet really is. So I turned to Prodicus …[15]

Similar addresses to the narratee also emerge in the *Phaedo* – as, for example, in the following passages (emphasis added):

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12 *Prt*. 316a3-5, my emphasis.

13 *Prt*. 309a1-2: 'Where do you come from, Socrates? And yet I need hardly ask the question, for I know that you have been in chase of the beautiful Alcibiades'.

14 *Prt*. 335c7-d3, my emphasis.

15 *Prt*. 339d10-e5, my emphasis.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

> On entering we found Socrates just released from chains, and Xanthippe, *whom you know*, sitting by him, and holding a child in her arms.
>
> *Phd.* 59e8-60a2

> At the same time he [the servant] handed the cup to Socrates, who in the easiest and gentlest manner, *Echecrates*, without the least fear or change of colour or feature, looking at the man from under the brows like a bull, as his manner was, took the cup and said … .
>
> *Phd.*117b2-6

When the audience's emotional state is beyond the limits of the narrator's perception, this is also acknowledged and accounted for by means of metalepsis: 'When we had heard them [Simmias and Cebes] state their objections, we all felt very much depressed, *as we told one another later*' (*Phd.* 88c1-2). Phaedo's remark 'as we told one another later' transgresses the boundaries between different narrative levels in that it belongs to the here and now of the act of narration. Finally, on one occasion in the *Symposium* the narrator issues a remark which momentarily transfers us to the upper narrative level: 'Pausanias came to a pause (*Pausaniou de pausamenou*) – this is the balanced way (*isa legein*) in which I have been taught by the wise to speak; and Aristodemus said that the turn of Aristophanes was next …'.[16] Note that Apollodorus' remark comes close to the one made by Socrates in *Republic* 1 (above), in that both demonstrate the extent of the narrator's control over the story; yet, as distinct from *Republic* 1, the metaleptic transgression produced in the *Symposium* is addressed to a fictional narratee and, as a result, does not involve the extradiegetic level of the narrative. On the whole, however, as we shall see immediately, metalepsis in the *Symposium* tends to assume a rather different form.

3.1.2 Two-tier Reported Speech: the *Parmenides* and the *Symposium*

No frame-breaking in the strict sense of the word occurs in the *Parmenides*. At the same time, thanks to Plato's use of reported speech, the presence of the frame narrators, first and foremost Antiphon, is felt throughout Pythodorus' narrative:

> *And Antiphon told us that Pythodorus said that* (*ephe … legein*) Parmenides and Zeno came to Athens at the Great Panathenaea; Parmenides was well

16 *Symp.* 185c4-6, my emphasis.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

> advanced in years, with white hair, of distinguished appearance, about sixty-five years old; Zeno was then nearly forty years of age, tall and fair to look upon.[17]

The *Parmenides* is thus presented as a narrative of a narrative of a narrative. Repeatedly reminding us of this fact, Plato blurs the boundaries between different narrative levels, thereby preventing the reader from immersing into the world of the narrated story.

This mode of presentation, resulting in that all the narrative levels are simultaneously present in the narrative, is especially characteristic of the *Symposium*. The recurrent use of a two-tier system of reported speech, which is the trademark of the *Symposium*, results in that the voice of the frame narrator is heard throughout the dialogue, constantly reminding us of his presence. As a result, Aristodemus' original story is thoroughly filtered through Apollodorus' presentation of it. As David Halperin put it:

> Plato constantly reminds the reader of the many narrators that intervene between the reader and the transmitted story – he emphasizes the *reported* character of the account by sprinkling throughout Apollodorus' narrative such phrases as 'he said that he said' (*ephe phanai*).[18]

3.2 *Metalepsis at Story Level: the* Euthydemus *and the* Phaedo

The action of the *Euthydemus* simultaneously proceeds on two levels. Socrates the narrator never loses sight of his narratee, repeatedly addressing Crito throughout the dialogue.[19] The result is a unique mixture of dramatic and narrated form,[20] which makes the dialogue equivalent to what contemporary literary theory identifies as the second-person narrative.[21] Everything indicates that the *Euthydemus*' constant switching back and forth between the story and the dramatic frame was meant to create a distance between what Socrates

17 *Prm.* 127a7-b5, my emphasis. See also *Prm.* 130a3-7, 137c2-5.

18 Halperin (1992) 97 (Halperin's emphasis). Cf. Hunter (2004) 23: 'this is a mode of presentation which never lets us forget that we are not being offered unmediated access to a "true account" of "what happened" in Agathon's house'.

19 *Euthd.* 275c5-6; 283a1-2; 291d5-6; 291e; 292d5-6; 292e8-293a1; 294d7-8; 303a4-5; 303b1-2; 304b6-7. Cf. Bowery (2007) 91.

20 Cf. Guthrie (1975) 267: 'a skilful blending of direct and reported forms'. See also Morgan (2004) 368; Collins (2015) 58.

21 On the metaleptic character of the second-person narrative see McHale (1987) 222–227; cf. Fludernik (2003) 385–386, 393–394, and n. 9 above.

asserts in this dialogue and what Plato's actual position is.[22] The Socrates of the *Euthydemus* frequently expresses unalloyed admiration for the virtuoso performance of the champions of eristics Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. To alert the reader that this admiration should not be taken at face value, Plato makes Crito supply common-sense reactions to the brothers' hairsplitting arguments at the upper narrative level,[23] especially in his favourable report of the opinion of an unnamed critic of eristics (most probably Isocrates).[24] Furthermore, he also lets Socrates express a nuanced opinion in the words that close the dramatic frame and are clearly addressed not to Crito alone:

SOCRATES: Do you then be reasonable, Crito, and do not mind whether the teachers of philosophy are good or bad, but examine philosophy itself well and carefully and, if it appears to you as unworthy, seek to turn away everyone from it, and not your sons only; but if it appears as what I believe it is, then cheer up and follow and serve it, you and yours, as the saying is (307b6-c4).

Owing to this strategy, in spite of Socrates' statements in the body of the dialogue, the metaleptic interplay between the frame and the framed establishes a balanced perspective on how the *Euthydemus* should be read.

A more narrowly focused case of frame-breaking occurs at *Euthydemus* 290e. Socrates' young interlocutor Cleinias arrives at the conclusion that just as geometricians, astronomers and mathematicians, having made their discoveries, hand them over to the dialecticians, so too generalship cannot be considered the supreme art because generals hand over the fruits of their victories to the statesmen. The idea that mathematics (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, harmonics) is subordinated to dialectic is central to the programme of higher education of the Guardians as outlined in Book 7 of the *Republic*.[25] So it is hardly mere chance that at this very moment Crito the narratee interferes by

22 Cf. Kahn (1996) 325: 'Plato makes use of the frame dialogue between Socrates and Crito, both in the middle and at the end of the narrated dialogue, like the *parabasis* in an Aristophanic comedy, to speak as it were directly to the readers'. Cf. also Collins (2015) 67: 'the running commentary which the framing encounter provides'. On the *parabasis* as marking 'a distinctive moment of frame-breaking' see Whitmarsh (2013) 13.

23 Cf. Ferrari (2010) 18, on the *Euthydemus*: 'By fully characterizing the narratee, Plato makes the situation clear'; on Crito's attitude see also Collins (2015) 62.

24 *Euthd*. 304d-305a. See the discussion in Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi (2014) 143–151.

25 *Resp*. 521d-541b. Cf. Friedländer (1964) 190, commenting on the *Euthydemus* passage: 'We sight the system of sciences developed in the *Republic*'. Similarly Kahn (1996) 321: 'The most advanced reference to dialectic in Group I [sc. the dialogues preceding the *Republic*]'.

asking: 'And do you mean, Socrates, that the youngster said all this?' (290e1-2). A brief exchange follows, in which Socrates ironically suggests that it was probably 'some superior entity' (*tis ton kreittonon*) who uttered these words. The startling reference to the superiority of dialectic over mathematics has been effectively highlighted. As we shall see immediately, a similar strategy of foregrounding by means of metalepsis is also characteristic of the *Phaedo*.

Like the *Euthydemus*, the *Phaedo* is a metaleptic dialogue whose action proceeds simultaneously on two narrative levels. In the framed narrative delivered by Phaedo, Socrates' opening arguments for the immortality of the soul – the argument from alternation, the argument from recollection, the argument from affinity – are followed by a structural break, which introduces the objections raised by Simmias and Cebes and serves as a transition to the culminating argument. The audience's reaction to the objections is worth being quoted in full:

> Well, when we had heard them state their objections, we all felt very much depressed, as we told one another later. We had been quite convinced by the earlier part of the discussion, and now we felt that they had upset our convictions and destroyed our confidence not only in what had been said already, but also in anything that was to follow later (88c1-7).

Suddenly, this reaction is echoed on the upper level by Phaedo's narratee. Echecrates interrupts Phaedo's narrative, expressing the same sentiments as the audience in the narrated story:

> ECHECRATES: There I feel with you and the others, by heaven I do, Phaedo, and when I was listening to you, I was asking myself the same question: What argument can I ever trust again? For what could be more convincing than the argument of Socrates, which has now fallen into discredit?[26]

Socrates' response to the objections prepares the ground for the final argument for the immortality of the soul and introduces the Theory of Forms (91c-101e).

On the central position of this section within the *Euthydemus* see Thesleff (2009 [1967]) 40, 11; cf. Chance (1992) 126.

26 *Phd.* 88c8-d3, translation is by H. Tredennick (1954). Cf. Taylor (1960) 194: 'The purpose of all this by-play is to call attention to the critical importance of the two problems which have just been raised. We are, in fact, at the turning-point of the discussion'. Cf. also Thesleff (2009 [1967]) 40–41.

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Now Simmias and Cebes are fully satisfied with Socrates' argument: ' "What you say is most true", said Simmias and Cebes, both speaking at once' (102a2). In another metaleptic leap, Echecrates echoes them again from the upper narrative level:

ECHECRATES: Yes, Phaedo; and I do not wonder at their assenting. Anyone who has the least sense will acknowledge the wonderful clearness of Socrates' reasoning.
PHAEDO: Certainly, Echecrates; and such was the feeling of the whole company at the time.
ECHECRATES: Yes, and equally of ourselves, who were absent, and are now listening (102a3-8).

The double frame-breaking which encloses the argument of the Theory of Forms not only highlights its central position in the *Phaedo* but also transfers the dialogue into the realm of actuality, thus providing it with a broader perspective than that supplied by the dialogue's immediate context. The latter is neatly conveyed by Echecrates' words 'and equally of ourselves, who were absent, and are now listening', inclusive of all readers and listeners of the dialogue.[27]

Echecrates' interventions thus affect the entire dialogue, functioning as an integral element of its plot. Note that the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo* are the only dialogues in which the metaleptic transgression is initiated not by the narrator, as in the other dialogues, but by the narratee. In view of this, it seems appropriate to compare Plato's use of metalepsis in these two dialogues to the following case of intradiegetic frame-breaking highlighted by Werner Wolf:

> Where this device [metaleptic frame-breaks] is used, a paradoxical transgression takes place between framing border and framed text. This can, for instance, be seen in Michael Ende's *Die unendliche Geschichte* (1979), where the principal character of the framing, a little boy reading a fairy tale book, is suddenly able to enter the world of this fairy tale not only metaphorically … but in person.[28]

27 *Phd.* 102a8: Καὶ γὰρ ἡμῖν τοῖς ἀποῦσι, νῦν δὲ ἀκούουσιν. Cf. Morgan (2004) 367: 'It is hard not to think that his [Echecrates'] reactions are a guide to reader reception and response'. Cf. also Rowe (1993) 211; Hösle (2012) 174–175; Collins (2012) 165–167; Finkelberg (2019) 90–92.
28 Wolf (2006) 201–202. Cf. Finkelberg (2019) 114–115.

This is precisely what Crito of the *Euthydemus* and Echecrates of the *Phaedo* do. Wolfgang Petersen's 1984 film based on Ende's book, *The Never Ending Story*, in which the process of metalepsis is vividly enacted, gives an excellent illustration of the effect produced. In both the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo* metalepsis affects the entire story level and acts as an effective plot-building tool. Characters belonging to the dramatic frame intrude into the story, collapsing the barrier between two different narrative levels and making the reception of the dialogue an integral element of the plot. The two dialogues simultaneously function on two narrative levels, exhibiting what Ryan (above, with n. 5) defines as 'a passage between levels that results in their interpenetration', which is the essential characteristic of ontological metalepsis.

4 Conclusions

Although Plato's dialogues include several cases of metalepsis that involve the extradiegetic level (Section 2), normally the 'reality' that intrudes into Plato's fictional universe is itself fictional. Metalepsis in Plato takes place between two different levels within the story-world, of which the upper one constitutes the dramatic or the narrative (*Parmenides*) frame of the dialogue.[29] As a result, rather than between the real and the fictional world, metalepsis in Plato's dialogues breaks the boundary between the narrative frame and the framed story, leaving the overall fictional edifice intact.

Most cases of metalepsis occurring in Plato's dialogues belong to the so-called 'rhetorical' type: suddenly, we are transferred to a different narrative level, but the flow of narrative is immediately resumed. From apostrophic addresses to the reader in the *Charmides*, the *Protagoras*, and the *Phaedo* to short asides in the *Republic*, the *Symposium*, and the *Protagoras* and the *Phaedo* again, rather more often than not metalepsis in Plato (to borrow Ryan's description of rhetorical metalepsis) 'opens a small window that allows a quick glance across levels, but the window closes after a few sentences, and the operation ends up reasserting the existence of boundaries'.[30] The *Parmenides* and the *Symposium* present a special case, in that they are filtered through several narrative voices, thus producing the kind of metaleptic contamination that is

29 In his recent discussion of the *Euthydemus* and *Protagoras*, Collins (2015) 45–169 misses this point, referring to the dramatic frame of the two dialogues as extradiegetic. The same is true of Halperin (1992) 98, who draws no distinction between the fictional narratee of the *Symposium* and the dialogue's implied reader.

30 Ryan (2006) 207.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

characteristic of ontological metalepsis. As far as I can see, this specific form of metalepsis is unique to Plato.

Ontological metalepsis in the proper sense of the word occurs in the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo*. The interferences of Crito in the former and of Echecrates in the latter affect the entire story level of the dialogues, becoming an integral part of their plot structure. This results in that the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo* function not only as stories delivered by Socrates and Phaedo, respectively, but also as dramas of the reception of these stories by the audience.[31]

In all cases discussed, metalepsis in Plato acts as a highly effective distancing strategy. The audience is reminded of the fictional character of the narrated world, thereby being prevented from fully immersing into it.[32] The constant presence of the narrator's voice in the fictional world of the *Symposium* and the *Parmenides* is obviously intended to serve the same purpose. To quote Richard Hunter, 'Plato's various experiments with dramatic frames show his persistent concern to advertise and problematise the fictional status of his dialogues'.[33]

It should be kept in mind in this connection that in Plato's eyes the greatest danger posed by mimetic art lay in its ability to cause the audience to immerse into the fictional world, to respond to it emotionally and to identify themselves with its characters. Plato understood only too well that, by exposing his audiences to a fictional reality created by his art, the mimetic artist, himself included, makes them temporarily lose their identities and be transported into a reality which has no direct correspondence to the world in which they live. 'We are delighted, and abandon ourselves and follow the action, suffering together with the characters' – this passage in *Republic* 10, relating to the response of the

31 See Brooks (1992) 236: 'Framed narratives and those, such as [Albert Camus'] *La Chute*, that incorporate the listener in the discourse of the speaker incorporate most explicitly a condition of all narrative: shape and meaning are the product of the listening as of the telling'.

32 On the distancing role of intradiegetic metalepsis see Wolf (2006) 202: 'Often metalepses (which, of course, can also take place between the extradiegetic and the intradiegetic levels) serve a recipient-centred function (by undermining aesthetic illusion) as well as an implicitly metafictional function: by stretching the (fantasy) potential of imaginary worlds to an unrealistic, even "impossible" extent, metalepses lay bare the ruling frame of such worlds which is usually concealed, namely their fictionality'.

33 Hunter (2004) 22. For an analogous interpretation of frame-breaking in Plato see McCabe (2008) 105–106. Cf. also Finkelberg (2006) 67–68: 'Plato's dialogues are metapoetical throughout. They abound in self-referential remarks, multiple dramatic frames, intertextual allusions – in short, in all those devices which, in that they prevent the work of art from consolidating into a single all-engulfing whole, destroy the illusion that a mimetic representation naturally tends to create'. On a distancing effect produced by the episodic structure of Plato's dialogues see *ibid.*, 65–68.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Athenian audience to the performance of tragic plays, gives the clearest idea of the degree of emotional involvement Plato had in mind.[34] It stands to reason that his use of metalepsis was purported to act as a remedy against what was perceived by him as the most undesirable effect of mimetic art.

34 *Resp.* 605d3-4 χαίρομέν τε καὶ ἐνδόντες ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς ἑπόμεθα συμπάσχοντες, my translation; see also *Resp.* 606a-b. Cf. Finkelberg (1998) 186–188; *ead.* (2014) 156–157.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

CHAPTER 3

Paradoxical Proems

On the Relationship between Διήγησις *and* Μίμησις *in Plato's Dialogues*

Carlotta Capuccino

Leave to the reader what the reader can manage

L. WITTGENSTEIN

∵

1 Introduction*

In their lively imagery and complex architectures which make them unique and irreducible to one another, the proems of Plato's dialogues are not only 'paths of flowers' traced to accompany the reader to 'the thorns and thistles' of metaphysical arguments, as Hegel called them.[1] These introductory scenes are not just literary ornaments of Plato's philosophical contents, but contain clever allusions to the meanings of his dialectical writing and his authorial anonymity. Plato chose to write anonymous philosophical dialogues, so we never hear him expressing himself on the important issues discussed by Socrates and the other characters. The thesis I would argue for is that the proems – or at least some of them – are the place where Plato decided to let us hear his voice in an allusive way, not about the individual contents of his doctrine, but about the meaning and form of his written philosophy. By reinterpreting the traditional role of *exordia* (and, in particular, the metaliterary function of ensuring the writer's credibility and authority among his audience),[2] the Platonic

* I warmly thank Stephen Halliwell for his very useful remarks and Richard Davies, who was kind enough to review my English.

1 Hegel (1979) 89. Since antiquity, readers of the Platonic dialogues have divided into those who attribute a philosophical value to the introductory scenes and those who regard them as literary ornaments of little or no theoretical relevance. For a history of the problem, see Capuccino (2014) 10–22.

2 On epic, tragic, lyric and historical beginnings, see the essays included in Dunn and Cole (1992).

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- 978-90-04-44399-0

proems perform the indispensable philosophical function of preserving the sense of Plato's philosophy for the reader akin to it.[3]

The Platonic dialogues exhibit two different writing styles:[4] some of them, like the *Euthyphro* or the *Phaedrus*, adopt a dramatic mode, which is the direct exchange of words between the characters; others, such as the *Republic*, the narrative or indirect mode, where the exchange is introduced by the voice of a narrator, which alternates with that of the characters. But there is a particular group of six dialogues, the so-called 'mixed dialogues' (*Protagoras*, *Euthydemus*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus*), in which the two modes alternate giving rise to a structural anomaly: the dialogue, usually subdivided into a proem, a middle part and an epilogue, appears two-headed, that is to say, equipped with a double proem. The proem 'internal' to the dialogical scene is in fact preceded by an 'external' proem that appears *paradoxical* because it is set in a place and at a time other than the place and time of the dialogue, and often between different interlocutors. I think it is especially these paradoxical proems, with their skilful narrative games, that contain allusions to Plato's thesis about what, as between διήγησις and μίμησις, is the ultimately preferable style for good philosophical writing.

The aim of this article is thus twofold: first, to determine which mode is the best according to Plato, indeed which mode is the only appropriate one for philosophical writing as he understood it; and secondly, to prove that it is Plato himself who shows us which mode is the only appropriate.[5] He does this, precisely, in an allusive way, through the subtle staging of the mixed dialogues' external proems, in particular those of the four dialogues – in the likely chronological order of composition: *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Parmenides* and

3 This argument, which I discussed in detail in my book *ΑΡΧΗ ΛΟΓΟΥ* (see Capuccino [2014]), and earlier in my Phd thesis of the same title (Capuccino [2010]), is symmetrical and opposite to the argument put forward by Christopher Rowe, according to which in the dialogues, we can hear the voice of Plato as to the content, but not as to the form adopted for transmitting them; cf. Rowe (2007) 33. Here I would like to test my general interpretation, paying particular attention to one aspect: Plato's stylistic choice, and the apparent primacy of indirect form highlighted in the most recent literature on the topic, which seems to converge on this point: see, for example, Tulli (2011), in particular 127–130, and Ho (2011).

4 See Capra (2003).

5 I agree with Kathryn Morgan that 'there is [...] a troubling gap between Plato's practice and any *explicit* theorising of it' (Morgan [2003] 101, my emphasis), because the anonymity that distinguishes Platonic dialogues, if seriously taken, prevents us from directly attributing to Plato, without further investigation and analysis, any of the claims made by the *dramatis personae*. However, I will try to show that there is another way, indirect, allusive, in which we can hear the author's voice.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Theaetetus – where the narration of events is not entrusted to the voice of Socrates.[6]

2 Matters of Fact

Let me start with some matters of fact. First, as we have indicated, Plato adopts for his dialogues *both* modes of writing – dramatic or mimetic and narrative or diegetic – and he probably does so with great awareness, as proved by his very detailed and technical analysis of λέξις in *Republic* 3.392c7-398b9. The context is educational: Socrates continues to investigate what 'types' of poetic λόγοι should be admitted in the Καλλίπολις, in line with an ethical criterion. Once the contents (λόγοι) have been fixed in some models or patterns,[7] at 392c6 the research is aimed at which 'form of expression' (λέξις) these contents can take. There are three possible styles available to anyone who wants to express himself, whether in oral or written form: the 'simple narration without imitation' (ἁπλῆ διήγησις),[8] the 'narration through imitation' (διήγησις διὰ μιμήσεως) and the 'mixed narration', which alternates between the two previous modes (διήγησις δι᾽ ἀμφοτέρων) (392d2-7). Plato decided to adopt only two of them: the direct imitation of the characters' voices, that is the simple exchange of words (διήγησις διὰ μιμήσεως), and the narration alternating the exchange of words (διήγησις δι᾽ ἀμφοτέρων); in other words, there is no Platonic dialogue in which the only voice we can hear is that of the narrator (ἁπλῆ διήγησις). In this way, the dialogues can be classified in the first instance relative to a stylistic bipartition into dramatic and narrative, and subsequently relative to the structural tripartition we have mentioned, into dialogues that are direct (or completely dramatic), indirect (or completely narrative) and mixed (that is alternating the two basic modes).[9] It should be noted that the alternation of modes in the

6 In an unpublished paper ('Platonic Prologues', written in 1986), Robert Arne defines the external proems with narrator other than Socrates as 'Platonic proems', attributing them to Plato's voice. Following his hypothesis of an author's proem, I have wondered what could justify it on a formal level, and I have arrived at the following conclusion: the absence from these proems of a narration by Socrates makes room unequivocally meant for Plato's voice, who, through this narrative device, can separate himself from the figure of Socrates. For a discussion, see Capuccino (2014) 213–214.

7 The examination of the poetic contents (λόγοι) begins at 2.376d9 and ends at 3.392c6.

8 The complete expression is formulated at 394b1: ἄνευ μιμήσεως ἁπλῆ διήγησις.

9 See the diagram in the Appendix. The category of 'mixed dialogues' is almost universally misunderstood by critics, who do not grasp the structural criterion that underlies the 'scenic' (τραγικῶς) classification mentioned by Diogenes Laertius (3.50), and therefore fail to apply the stylistic tripartition to the whole *corpus platonicum*. The diagram, of which I present here an updated English version, is therefore an original contribution. Compared

- 978-90-04-44399-0

mixed dialogues is therefore between the simple exchange of words and the *mixed narration*, namely the one that alternates the narrator's voice with the dialogical lines.

A brief digression on the vocabulary adopted in this passage of the *Republic*. In the Platonic writings, both λόγος and λέξις take on a double meaning, general and specific: λόγος indicates on the one hand speech and on the other the content of speech (ἅ […] λεκτέον, 'what you should say'); λέξις equally means in a broad sense 'expression', 'speech' or 'language',[10] and more narrowly the mode of expression or the form (ὡς λεκτέον, 'how it should be said') as opposed to the content. At the beginning of the passage in question, both terms are used in their technical meaning,[11] but in the following the two meanings are compresent. It is precisely in support of the technical meaning of λέξις that Socrates introduces the noun διήγησις, a term that we do not meet in authors earlier than Plato. It too has immediately a double meaning: in a general sense, it is used as a synonym for λέξις[12] and it does not mean exactly 'narration'.[13] An analysis of its occurrences in the *corpus platonicum* (only six outside the *Republic*, where they are fifteen) clearly shows that the basic meaning of the word is a detailed[14] exposition of facts (narration) but also of thoughts and

to the diagram contained in Capuccino (2014), I placed the *Menexenus* among the dialogues whose attribution is doubtful, based on a recent and persuasive study of Simonetta Nannini (2014).

10 Without becoming an exact synonym of λόγος. Even when used in a broad sense, λέξις indeed indicates that we are dealing with a particular type of language, for example the legal language to which Socrates declares himself alien in the *Apology*; and in fact the occurrence at 17d3 is immediately followed by a second one (18a2) which makes clear reference to the modes of expression typical of the courts (and not of Socrates).

11 That it is a technical use is signalled by the reaction of the interlocutor, who does not understand: Τοῦτο, ἦ δ' ὅς, οὐ μανθάνω ὅτι λέγεις (*Resp*. 3.392c9-10); and again: Καὶ τοῦτο, ἦ δ' ὅς, ἔτι δέομαι σαφέστερον μαθεῖν (d7). For a more detailed lexical analysis, see Capuccino (2014) 27 ff.

12 Cf. Gastaldi (1998) 362–363: 'Il punto di partenza è costituito dalla delineazione di uno schema che articola il denominatore comune della *diegesis*, termine che si sostituisce qui a quello di *lexis* a indicare la modalità espositiva'; *contra* Couloubaritsis (1987) 102: '[…] l'association, par Platon, de λέξις et de διήγησις, dans le texte en question de la *République*, ne signifie pas qu'il ne discerne pas d'autres types possibles de *lexis*'.

13 In fact, the term is used to refer to past events, present and future. It will be only with Aristotle that it takes on the specific meaning of 'narration'. Cf. e.g. *Poet*. 19.1456b8-13; 24.1459b36-37; *Rh*. 3.13.1414a37-39; 3.16.1416b16 ff.

14 The *detailed* exposition, emphasised by the prefix δια-, is very often ἐξ ἀρχῆς (*Phd*. 59c8, *Symp*. 174a1-2, *Euthd*. 272d9), aims to be σαφής (*Phd*. 58d2, *Symp*. 172b4-c1; cf. *Chrm*. 153c6 and *Euthd*. 275c5) and it takes σχολή (*Phd*. 58d4 ff., *Resp*. 10.615a5-6, *Ti*. 38e2, *Menex*. 239b6-7). See also the use of the verb ἐπεκδιηγέομαι in *Phd*. 97e1-2, 4.

opinions,[15] which may take on any of the three forms we have mentioned: (ἄνευ μιμήσεως) ἁπλῆ διήγησις, διήγησις διὰ μιμήσεως and διήγησις δι᾽ ἀμφοτέρων. In its specific meaning, διήγησις is synonymous with ἁπλῆ διήγησις[16] and it is therefore used in the context in contradistinction to[17] διήγησις διὰ μιμήσεως or, in abbreviated form, μίμησις. This authorises our reflection on what is, of the two, the preferable form of expression.

Second, and consequently, it is undeniable that Plato makes extensive use of what he has called μίμησις: in its pure form or interspersed with the διήγησις, it is always present in his works. Finally, in Books 3 and 10 of the *Republic*, Plato harshly criticises μίμησις in all its forms and from all points of view: ethical, psychological, epistemological and ontological. If we want to give a minimal definition that fixes the basic meaning of the word, we can say that μίμησις is for Plato both the imitation of objects, for example the painting in perspective of a building, and the imitation of people, as when an actor plays a character or a writer lets the protagonists of his work speak in the first person through dialogue (the mimetic style as described in Book 3 of the *Republic*).[18] In this double form it is to be deplored for three reasons. (a) First of all for its deceptive nature.[19] A typical case of this deception is the painting technique of *trompe l'oeil*, which creates in the viewer the illusion of being in front of a real object, for example a door or a window, whereas it is only a skilled painting (σκιαγραφία, for the ancients). (b) In addition to this, imitation is three degrees away from being and truth: it is a copy of a copy of the original. For example, the painting of a bed is only a copy of the wooden bed manufactured by the artisan, which in its turn is a copy of the idea of bed, which for Plato is the only original, what properly *is* a bed.[20] These first two reasons are part of the so-called ontological

15 Four of the six occurrences do not mean 'narration': *Phdr*. 246a3; *Grg*. 465e6; *Ti*. 38d6-e3, 48d4-e1. In this context, it was decided to maintain 'narration', because it is the most appropriate translation. In the case of the Homeric poems, which are the object of Socrates'analysis, διήγησις does indeed mean 'narration'.

16 For example, in *Resp*. 3.397b1-2 λέξις is instead of διήγησις *lato sensu*, and διήγησις of ἁπλῆ διήγησις.

17 I do not therefore agree with André Gaudreault, for whom διήγησις and μίμησις are '[c]atégories qui, au contraire de ce que l'on avance généralement, ne seraient nullement envisagées comme dichotomiques par Platon' (Gaudreault [1989] 80 n. 3; cf. Halliwell [2009] 18–19). Indeed, διήγησις as narration or exposition *lato sensu* and μίμησις are non-dichotomous categories, while μίμησις and διήγησις *stricto sensu* are called by Plato himself 'opposite' (ἐναντία, 394b4).

18 For a discussion of the possible translations of the word μίμησις, see Palumbo (2008; the author prefers 'representation' to 'imitation').

19 *Resp*. 10.595b5-7.

20 *Resp*. 10.597e ff.

and epistemological criticism of μίμησις, a criticism that concerns its nature. (c) Third, if the moral characters imitated are blameworthy, imitation is harmful for the human soul in virtue of the emotional involvement that it is liable to arouse.[21] Consider, for example, the audience's empathy with the characters in a play. This moral or psychological criticism concerns the supposed usefulness of μίμησις. Because of its pervasive scope, it will therefore be crucial to ask whether such an accusation is or is not without appeal.[22]

To sum up these facts, we can draw the first two interesting consequences. (1) *In primis*, they authorise us to accept the suggestion of Jacques Brunschwig that sometimes – and this would be the case – *in talking about others*, *Plato is perhaps talking about himself*.[23] In fact, in the passage of *Republic* 3, reflection on modes is clearly extended to any speaker or writer, therefore, not only to poets and mythologists, but also to philosophers, and to Plato himself (πάντες οἱ ποιηταὶ καὶ οἵ τι λέγοντες, 397c8).[24] As regards granting him a form of awareness, there is no doubt: the long passage on λέξις, six Stephanus pages (392c-398c), is sufficient in itself to prove it, as well as, symmetrically and contrariwise, the fact that Plato wrote at least twenty-five dialogues[25] is enough to witness his awareness of the use of writing to convey philosophical opinions, despite the famous criticisms made in the *Phaedrus* (that is, after all, from within one of his written works). In other words, *awareness is demonstrated by the use of practices that are at the same time subject to the scrutiny of his own critical reason*, and this would seem to exclude that they are the exercise of undeniable literary skills for its own sake. But we have to understand whether or not he wanted – and if so, how – to make readers aware in turn of his stylistic choices and, in particular, whether he wanted to share with us a reflection on the *value* of such choices, that is on the *philosophical relationship* between the form of his writing and the contents transmitted. In other words, we have to verify the hypothesis of Brunschwig, along with that of Michael Frede, according to which the form and content of the Platonic dialogues are inextricably linked in the only 'responsible' way to write about philosophy.[26]

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21 *Resp*. 10.603c ff. The main accusation is that of corrupting even the best men (605c).

22 It is notoriously difficult to reconcile the criticisms of *Republic* 3 and 10. My attempt to answer is to be found in Capuccino (2014) 27–65. For the critical literature on this subject, see *ibid*., 321–324.

23 Cf. Brunschwig (1974) xvii.

24 Cf. 393d8: φράσω δὲ ἄνευ μέτρου· οὐ γάρ εἰμι ποιητικός; and 396e4-5: Οὐκοῦν διηγήσει χρήσεται οἵᾳ ἡμεῖς ὀλίγον πρότερον διήλθομεν περὶ τὰ τοῦ Ὁμήρου ἔπη.

25 See the diagram in the Appendix.

26 Cf. Frede (1992) 202. Frede's argument becomes even more convincing in my view when compared with the analysis of the poetic λόγος that Socrates advances in the *Republic*,

At this point, before proceeding, we should reply to a possible basic objection. Some critics support the thesis, which is contrary to my own, that the 'narratological'[27] remarks of Plato, or rather of Socrates as a Platonic character, are always and inevitably within his written work, thus creating a weave of narratological theory and practice, which calls for delicate handling.[28] This is, for example, the position of Stephen Halliwell: 'Since, in my view, there is no reliable hermeneutic for tracing a monologic authorial stance (about anything) within Platonic dialogue, "theory" and "practice" of narrative in Plato are therefore […] inextricable'.[29] In my view, however, this is just a special case[30] of the general inextricability between form and content of Platonic philosophy mentioned by Frede. That form and content are inextricable or indissoluble[31] does not mean that they are confused or logically inseparable, but rather interdependent, which indicates, on the contrary, that they *cannot* be explained *other than* in relation to one another.[32] The narratological considerations, unlike other theoretical content of the dialogues, have precisely this advantage: we can compare them with something that is unquestionably attributable to Plato, at least for the group of twenty-five dialogues accepted as authentic by broad consensus.[33] This group of dialogues is the work Plato left

where the goodness of such λόγος seems to depend precisely on the right interweaving of content (λόγος) and expressive form (λέξις), each of them receiving a depth analysis, respectively in the second and third book.

27 By 'narratology' I refer in this context to any reflection on the form of expression that a λόγος, oral or written, can take. I do not, therefore, make a purely technical use of this term, even though such reflections invite a confrontation with modern narratological science, as suggested by the analysis of S. Halliwell (2009), and as I myself have shown in Capuccino (2014), carrying out a kind of parallel analysis in the apparatus of footnotes.

28 The same applies to the famous critique of writing in the *Phaedrus* (274e ff.); see Vegetti (1989) 201–227 and Cambiano (1994) 91–104.

29 Halliwell (2009) 19.

30 Perhaps it is the emblematic case.

31 'I shall focus on one particular way in which philosophy and literary form seem to me to be inseparably joined in the dialogues' (Frede [1992] 202).

32 This interpretative attitude is typical of the so-called 'third way': 'The "third way" […] is not a new school or a new interpretation: it is instead a way of exploring relatively new territory beyond the boundaries of the skeptical and "doctrinal" conceptions of philosophy that have so far ruled Platonic studies' (Gonzalez [1995] x). The 'third way' between skepticism and dogmatism, not only in the interpretation of Plato, was in fact already indicated by Hegel: '[…] daß es außer dem Skepticismus und Dogmatismus noch ein drittes, nemlich eine Philosophie gebe' (Hegel [1968] 209); and in an even more radical form, by Wittgenstein: 'The philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas. That is what makes him into a philosopher' (Wittgenstein [1967] § 455).

33 The philosophy of Plato is in what he says (preventing us, however, from attributing it to him), but also at what he *does* (i.e. writing dialogues), as well as for Apollodorus

- 978-90-04-44399-0

to us: it is a matter of fact. Consequently, if we can decipher their mechanisms, by comparing them with the reflections made by the dialogues' characters, we have a chance – perhaps really the only one – to understand what Plato himself thought about this problem.

It is true – as Halliwell has observed – that 'one should not extract a conception of narrative from the text and treat it as though it had independent, free-standing Platonic authority'.[34] This would be an improper attribution, because it derives from considerations directly attributable only to the characters who formulate and share them within dialogue. And that means that we cannot, *on this basis*, attribute to Plato any narratological theory. However, we must not forget that Plato is the author of the dialogues in which these considerations are formulated, and this means that he was fully aware of the framework of narratological questions; hence, it is not reasonable to think that he posed himself the questions within his work without having reflected on his own narratological choices. To deny Plato this awareness would mean indeed to deny him the reputation as both a refined thinker and writer that has given him pride of place in the history of Western thought up to now. Which, I am sure, none of us would be easily willing to do.

(II) If we accept this first result, the second presents itself immediately as a paradox, namely the paradox of mimetic style, which, along with the paradox of writing as such and with that of the authorial anonymity, means that Plato's work and Plato himself as its author carry a burden of justification. The dialogues challenge the reader with a real *chain of paradoxes*. As is well known, in the *Phaedrus*, the practice of writing is condemned for three serious defects that generate equally many dangers for the reader and for the author. First, its character as a φάρμακον: an ambivalent Greek word that can mean either a drug in the sense of a cure, or a poison. Writing, the marvellous invention presented as the cure for the constitutional weakness of human memory, destined to give way to forgetfulness, is however, according to Plato, a powerful poison which prevents readers from exercising their mnemonic faculties – because if you can reread at any time you do not need to remember – and over time this leads inexorably memory to atrophy, like something dead replacing something alive. Secondly, writing, unlike the oral dialogue, is mute or repetitive, that is, if questioned, it does not respond, or it replies by always saying the same. Thirdly, writing cannot defend itself against misunderstandings if it falls into the

φιλοσοφεῖν means spending time (συνδιατρίβειν) with Socrates, trying to know every day what he says and does (*Symp*. 172c-173a).

34 Halliwell (2009) 19.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

wrong hands: it would need the help of its 'father', that is, of its author, who, however, cannot always or forever rush to its rescue.

If we solve this first paradox by appealing to the dialogue form of Platonic writing, which reproduces oral dialogue as closely as possible, that is, by similarity, we immediately generate a second paradox, which is just what concerns us here, namely mimetic writing. By imitating the oral dialogue, the written one inevitably collides with the *Republic*'s criticism of poetic μίμησις. To solve this second paradox, we just have to evoke the diegetic-mimetic writing:[35] Plato not only writes dramatic dialogues, such as we find in tragedies and comedies, but also narrative dialogues, where the dialogical lines are introduced by the voice of a narrator who is responsible for them, and this seems to be some sort of control of μίμησις by διήγησις. In the next four sections of this article I will try to show that both hypotheses – that of Brunschwig and that of Frede – are well founded, and that the places where Plato lets us hear his own voice about his stylistic choices, and where he answers the apparent paradox of his writing, are just what I have called 'paradoxical proems'. Plato thus seems to respond to a paradox with another paradox.

3 Plato's Paradoxical Proems

The mixed dialogues are characterised, as we have seen, by the alternation of dramatic and narrative mode at the structural level, that is, the style changes in the transition from one part of the dialogue to another, particularly from the proem to the dialogue, and also, but only sometimes, in the passage from the dialogue to an epilogue.[36] For this to occur, recourse must be had to a literary procedure that has had a great impact on Eastern and Western literature, and that we find for the first time in the Homeric poems: narration *à cascade*, *as a matryoshka*, or *like Chinese boxes*.[37] An original event, which in the Platonic case is always a dialogue, is made known to the reader *from a certain distance*, that is, through one or more levels of narration. The 'zero level' of this process is represented by the dramatic dialogues of Plato, such as the *Crito*, where the

35 Cf. Vegetti (2003), Lesson 4: *Scrivere la filosofia* and Lesson 5: «*Solo Platone non c'era*».

36 On the full range of structural anomalies of the Platonic dialogues, see Capuccino (2014) 95–100.

37 Cf. Diès (1965) 7 and Genette (1972) 242. On the literary procedures within ancient texts, I find indispensable the classic de Jong (1987) and the more recent de Jong, Nünlist and Bowie (2004) and Nünlist (2009); for a more wide-ranging bibliography, see Grethlein and Rengakos (2009).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

scene opens at the time Crito visits Socrates in prison, following the trial in 399 BCE. After waiting for the awakening of Socrates, who, at the arrival of Crito at sunrise was still sleeping, we witness *directly* the dialogue between the two friends. In the mixed dialogues, the scene is such that the original event depends on the narration by someone who may or may not have taken part in it, but who, for some reason, evokes it only after a certain period of time has lapsed.[38] The work opens on an outer scene, as such subsequent to the event that will be narrated, in a sort of additional proem. This external proem, which is paradoxical because unrelated to the event we are interested in (it is set in a different time and place, among different characters),[39] is itself a dialogue because this is the literary form adopted by Plato. The standard examples are four dialogues – *Euthydemus*, *Protagoras*, *Phaedo* and *Symposium* –, in which the external proem has a dramatic style and introduces a narrative dialogue.[40]

If we consider only the mixed dialogues with a narrator other than Socrates, the first narrative level is exemplified by the *Phaedo*, whose external proem places us as spectators of the narration of Socrates' death by Phaedo, who was present at the event, to the Pythagorean Echecrates in his homeland Phlius, a foreign land. We find a second level narration in the *Symposium*: we are in about 400 BCE, in Athens, and a follower of Socrates, Apollodorus, repeats, upon request by an anonymous audience, the story he had already narrated a few days before to an acquaintance named Glaucon about a symposium in which Agathon, Socrates and Alcibiades among others took part in the past, and about their speeches on love. Apollodorus, however, is not a direct witness of those events because he was too young at the time, but, in turn, he heard the story from a certain Aristodemus of Cydathenaeum, who attended the symposium as a listener. So Apollodorus says that Aristodemus told him that…: a second-level narration. Compared to the model described above, two cases, the *Parmenides* and the *Theaetetus*, are anomalous, because they too have an external proem, but the transition from this proem to the dialogue does not imply a difference in style. In particular, on the one hand both the proem and the dialogue of the *Parmenides* are narrated (the transition to a direct form occurs, inadvertently, only later, at a significant turning point in the dialogue); in the *Theaetetus*, on the other hand, they have both a dramatic form. In the *Parmenides* we witness the longest narrative chain, i.e. a third-level narration.[41]

38 The distance in time is actually inevitable to represent the mechanism of oral transmission.

39 Paradoxical also because it is not always reflected in an epilogue, which is likewise external and, as such, returns the reader once more to the time of the opening scene.

40 See the diagram in the Appendix.

41 The primacy, however, remains of the *Symposium* as a narrative complexity, a real *stemma codicum*, with different 'traditions' and *lacunae*.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Setting and audience are anonymous: Cephalus of Clazomenae tells about when, in Athens, Antiphon, half-brother of Adeimantus and Glaucon (and therefore also of Plato), told him that Pythodorus, a follower of Zeno, told that Zeno, Parmenides and Socrates said that… The original dialogue among Zeno, Parmenides and a very young Socrates dates back more than 70 years earlier: an enormous temporal gap. The most emblematic case, however, remains that of the *Theaetetus*, which breaks away from the paradigm of oral transmission and presents for the very first time the transcription into a book of Socrates' oral narrations. The scene opens in Megara, where Euclides' slave is preparing to read in front of him and his friend Terpsion a βιβλίον, a book. Euclides himself had produced it by transcribing the story that Socrates told and repeatedly confirmed to him while he was in prison in Athens, of a dialogue which took place several years before between him and the mathematician Theodorus along with his young and promising student Theaetetus. However, in transcribing the story of Socrates, who, as far as the philosophical content is concerned, seems to be the real author of the book, Euclides alters its form: he omits *inserenda* or narrative indications as 'I said' or 'he replied', and turns the narration into a direct dialogue similar to the original one. Beyond the structural differences and the great stylistic range of these proems, what is distinctive about them, is the focus on the mechanisms for transmitting and preserving the λόγος – the oral narration and writing – and on their functioning. They are therefore presented as the privileged place in which to seek an answer to what, for Plato, are the means and styles more or less fit for speaking and writing about philosophy.

4 The Primacy of Διήγησις?

Let us, then, consider what elements of these four paradoxical proems favour the primacy of διήγησις over μίμησις as a preferable style and whether, as a result, the diegetic-mimetic writing is a good solution to the paradoxical nature of Platonic dialogues. I think we can distinguish at least seven sets of reasons. (1) First, unlike the dramatic dialogues of the first period of Plato's production (the so-called 'Socratic dialogues'),[42] the narrative frames reveal the fictitious nature of dialogues, by distinguishing them from the original event that they

42 As is known, the Platonic production includes 36 works (including 34 dialogues, the *Apology of Socrates* and the *corpus* of 13 letters) written over a span of about 50 years. Of these works, 25 are certainly considered authentic by the great majority of the interpreters (see the diagram in the Appendix): 16, that is, two thirds, have a dramatic or mimetic form, 6 a mixed form and 3 a narrative form. The tripartition of these writings in

- 978-90-04-44399-0

imitate. In this way they seem to answer the first accusation of *Republic* 10. (2) Secondly, the written narration reproduces the chain of oral narrations and its fundamental function of transmitting and preserving the λόγος: the direct exchange of words between Socrates and the interlocutor or interlocutors he faces from time to time, would be doomed to oblivion without somebody's telling it to someone else, and so preserving and diffusing it. This is evident in the *Theaetetus*, where Socrates himself makes public a dialogue of which he had been the protagonist, by narrating it several times to Euclides, who will take care to preserve it and pass it down. It is also particularly evident in the *Symposium* and *Parmenides*, where the conservation of two such extraordinary events as the symposium at Agathon's home, starring the most influential professionals of that time, and the dialogue between Zeno, old Parmenides and a very young Socrates, are entrusted to the memory of a number of tellers. These narrators play a very crucial role. (3) Thirdly, the narrative levels put the reader at a 'safe distance' from the original dialogue, away from

(1) youthful, Socratic or aporetic works (399–388 BCE), (2) medium or maturity dialogues (387–367 BCE), and (3) late or old age dialogues (from 365 BCE forward), is the result of a stylistic reconstruction of Platonic thought, which in turn confirms an evolutionary hypothesis formulated already in the 1800s to solve the exegetical problem posed by the presence, in the *corpus platonicum*, of theses opposed or contradictory to each other, which dissuaded the interpreters from attributing a unitary philosophical system to Plato. This general reconstruction, which became canonical among the interpreters during the 1900s, starting from Gilbert Ryle's observations on the different length of the dialogues based on the group they belong to (Ryle [1966] 39–40; see Cavini [1982] 28–29), also takes into account other criteria, such as the analysis of the philosophical content, the literary structure of the work, the textual references to other writings of the *corpus* and the central or marginal role of Socrates, confirming to be, over time, an effective interpretative grid. The stylistic criterion is not sufficient to establish a reliable relative chronology, because, on its own, it cannot account for Plato's rewriting of his works, which have inevitably altered the stylistic indicators. On the other hand, it is undeniable that some works have been written before others and that therefore, at least in fact, an evolutionary line must be recognised. Of course, as C. Kahn has pointed out (Kahn [1996]), it cannot be a rigid tripartition, but only a mobile (as well as relative) chronology. Assuming this mobile chronology, it seems difficult to deny that the greatest concentration of dramatic dialogues is in the first and third period (with the length variations detected by Ryle), at the extremes of the Platonic production, therefore, and that both the frames of the mixed dialogues and the indirect style of narrative dialogues mainly concern the central phase of his production. The theses supported in this essay, however, retain their plausibility even supposing that the traditional mobile tripartition is not sufficiently reliable and that only in an advanced stage of his writing, between maturity and old age, Plato, observing with a retrospective look his work, has reflected deeply on the stylistic question, entrusting his reflection to the complex architectural structures of the mixed dialogues, which likely belong to this advanced stage.

the attraction power of μίμησις and from the risk of an uncritical identification with the characters who animate it, and who often embody morally reprehensible attitudes. In this way, they appear to answer the moral or psychological accusation. (4) Fourthly, the narrative form also aims to highlight for the benefit of the reader the reliability of the recounted λόγος, by referring, at the origin of the narrative chains, to the authoritative sources which legitimate its contents, including the very voice of Socrates. This happens for example in the *Phaedo*, which stresses that the narrator Phaedo is a direct witness of the narrated events, that is, he personally heard the last words of Socrates. It also occurs in the *Symposium*, where Aristodemus, the first narrator in chronological order, is presented as a follower of Socrates who also was a direct witness, although passive, of the speeches about love given at the symposium. Finally, we encounter it in the *Theaetetus*, where Socrates is both the protagonist and the narrative voice.

(5) Fifthly, another reason to prefer the narration is its own pleasantness:[43] to repeat or listen to the λόγοι of Socrates is pleasant, whoever pronounces them; indeed, it seems the most pleasant activity that one can engage in.[44] (6) Sixthly, in the Megarian proem of the *Theaetetus*, it is said that narrative interludes are deleted as 'causing disturbance to writing' (ἐν τῇ γραφῇ μὴ παρέχοιεν πράγματα, 143c1). This recalls the origin of the written work in narration, without which what is written, in direct form for convenience, would not exist. Plato seems to say that the 'most correct' form of a dialogue would be diegetic, but, for listeners (and readers) to be able to follow more easily its complex philosophical arguments, he has made it mimetic. Thus, we have a kind of artificial, *ad hoc*, operation, which is functional to the philosophical work. (7) Finally, there are some passages in the *Republic*, in Books 5, 6 and 10, which refer more or less explicitly to the *Republic* itself as a literary work. The underlying message is: the philosopher who, within the dialogue, reflects on a certain issue, for example what is a good city (5.472e), to create a model 'in speech',[45] does not imitate material reality, which is to say some cities that already exist, but the reality of the ideal paradigm (6.484c), following the pattern he has in his soul. That this form of imitation is preferable from an ontological point of view is clear from a passage in Plato's famous criticism of Homer in Book 10:

43 This argument is supported in Ho (2011) 10–11. Cf. *Phd.* 58d and *Symp.* 173c.

44 See *Phd.* 58d5-8.

45 Cf. 6.501e.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

> 'My dear Homer', we can say to him, 'if you are not *two removes from truth* in this matter of goodness – not a maker of images, what we defined as an imitator – if you are even *at one remove from truth*, and if you were capable of distinguishing the behaviour which makes men better or worse in private life or in public life, then tell us which city has ever been better governed because of you […]' (*Resp*. 599d, my emphasis).[46]

By addressing these words to Homer, Plato describes, *negatively*, his own writing, namely the only one able – for the reasons given in previous books – to put itself at the shortest distance from the original (the ideal paradigm) that guarantees its goodness. Since these reflections are contained within the *Republic*, a narrative dialogue, the writing in question should be the diegetic-mimetic one. So διήγησις seems to be the best way, indeed the only one that may be accepted, even if in its mixed variant, and Plato's choice seems to confirm in full his analysis of the stylistic forms in *Republic* 3.

But things are not quite so simple. We can formulate against the seven reasons just advanced in favour of διήγησις as many objections. (1) First of all, while revealing the fictitious nature of the original dialogue they introduce, the narrative frames have the disadvantage of betraying its nature or essence. Dialogue handed down from one narration to another owes its philosophical efficacy to the essential character of direct *viva voce* exchange between two interlocutors. Without any mediation, therefore, so that the interlocutor could honestly put his beliefs at stake and take the responsibility of speaking with his own voice. (2) Secondly, the chain of oral narrations reproduced in the mixed dialogues is not without flaws. If the *Parmenides*' external proem emphasises the prodigious memory and the reliability of its narrators, competent and related, for reasons of various kinds and nature, to the participants in the original dialogue, the *Symposium*, on the contrary, does not hide the inevitable gaps of human memory, which fails when its attempt to remember exceeds its powers. On several occasions, this weakness is signaled in the two proems (178a, 180c), and Plato himself plays with the mechanism of forgetfulness towards the end of the dialogue, when our first-hand narrator gives into sleep and does not hear the last dialogue between Socrates, Agathon, and Aristophanes, leaving us a dry mouth (223d1 ff.). (3) If, as we have seen, the distance removes the reader from the harmful effects of identification, at the same time it prevents him from being directly involved in dialogue as an honest intellectual exercise. (4) The appeal to an authoritative source at the origin of the narrative

46 Translation is by Griffith in Ferrari (2000).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

chain would certainly be a legitimation of the λόγος, by declaring it reliable;[47] but what difference would it make if we heard the authoritative voice directly, without the risks of incomplete or inaccurate mediation?[48] (5) It is certainly true that the dialogues provide us with more than one testimony in favour of the pleasure aroused by listening to a story that has Socrates as protagonist, but this only means that the σωκρατικοὶ λόγοι – oral or written – are intrinsically pleasurable. That is, listening to the narration of a dialogue with Socrates is *as* pleasant as, but not more pleasant than, listening to Socrates directly, if that were possible.[49]

If the first five points derive from a general reflection on the paradoxical proems with a narrator other than Socrates, the last two concern some rather specific passages, but at the same time have a general validity. (6) When Euclides, in the Megarian proem of the *Theaetetus*,[50] claims to have eliminated the *inserenda* from the original transcription of the Socratic narration in order not to disturb the writing, Terpsion specifies that, in so doing, he has not made the λόγος 'inconvenient' (οὐδέν γε ἀπὸ τρόπου, 143c7). According to Plato, the πρέπον of something or someone is its/his natural condition.[51] This means that it concerns the essence and not the appearance of the thing, which would seem to rehabilitate the direct form of expression. (7) Finally, the passages from the *Republic* we have mentioned about Platonic dialogues as an example of imitation of the original, i.e. that is of the paradigm, and therefore of good imitation, do not tell us at all that this is to be referred to the *Republic*'s diegetic writing. On the contrary, in all the relevant passages, the issue is not raised

47 And yet, in the chain of oral transmission of the λόγος shown in the *Symposium*, Socrates is only very partially the source that guarantees the control of the report (as opposed to what happens in the case of the written transmission represented in the *Theaetetus*): in fact, he merely confirms what Aristodemus recalls, verifying the partial contents of his report, without integrating the gaps (*Symp*. 173b). In the *Parmenides*, for chronological reasons, he cannot do so at all.

48 Obviously within the dialogic fiction. From the external point of view, it all depends on the author's mind, that is, on his reconstruction and/or invention of the event.

49 Before devoting himself to daily listening to Socrates, Apollodorus was ἀθλιώτερος (cf. *Symp*. 172c-173a and see n. 33 above).

50 I think it is not by chance that, in this reconstruction, the *Theaetetus* plays a special role: if the general theme of the dialogue is ἐπιστήμη, then it is no wonder that the non-argumentative parts of the work allude to the mechanisms of acquisition and transmission of that knowledge whose nature the dialogue aims to define. Cf. Capuccino (2014) 284–286.

51 Cf. *Hp. mai*. 290c-291b (as opposite to 290c); *Resp*. 4.444b; *Leg*. 4.717e1, 6.757c1-6. On ἀπὸ τρόπου, opposite to πρὸς τρόπου ('convenient', 'appropriate'), and thus to πρέπον, cf. *Cra*. 421c3 and *Resp*. 5.470b10.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

and discussed by the Socrates-narrator whom we met in the proem, but by the Socrates-participant in the original event that he is now narrating. So, the best candidate for a mode of writing ontologically closer to the original seems to be once again μίμησις, rather than διήγησις.

The consequence of all this is deeply Socratic: we are in a state of aporia. Neither μίμησις nor διήγησις seem to have passed the test as the best form of expression for writing a philosophical dialogue in the manner of Plato. Yet, Plato uses both in the dialogues, and in his paradoxical proems he seems to place them not only in relation to each other, but in direct competition. So, how can we solve this aporia?

5 Philosophical Μίμησις

The paradoxical proems can suggest the way, starting, yet again, from the proem of the *Theaetetus*.

(1) The best form, 'not at all inconvenient', as mentioned in the proem, is the direct one, that is the most faithful imitation of the original: the direct scene is indeed more faithful to the oral dialogue than its indirect narration, which adds to it an external voice, that of the narrator. But what is this original? Not a dialogue that really happened in the past between Socrates and some other interlocutors, such as our Theaetetus and Theodorus, because the scenes of Platonic dialogues – as we know – are fictitious.[52] So it is not a second-order imitation, that is an imitation of a historical dialogue, as the painter imitates the bed built by a carpenter. It is rather an imitation as close as possible to a σωκρατικὸς λόγος, an imitation, that is, of the essence of the Socratic discourse: namely the asymmetric dialogue with fixed roles that aims to inquire into what virtues and the other important things in life are, in order to guide human actions.[53] This kind of imitation is placed at the shortest distance from the direct relationship with the original, and therefore replies to the ontological criticism of the *Republic*.

(2) If the mimetic form is the best one, why not to write directly a dramatic dialogue, as Plato has already done in most cases and will return to do, a dialogue like *Phaedrus*, or the *Laws*? What good is there in showing the long genesis of the λόγος whose direct form is nothing more than its final

52 According to Charles Kahn fictionality was characteristic of all the σωκρατικοὶ λόγοι (Kahn [1996] 32–35); cf. Morgan (2003) 101, 105.

53 The evolution of this λόγος within Plato's dialogues has yet to be studied starting from this new perspective.

outcome? The aim could be the following: added to the dialogue set in Athens, the external proem reveals its deception by showing the fictitious and derivative nature of its imitation. In other words, the external proem, the one set in Megara, declares that the internal dialogue, the one set in Athens, is an imitation, a mimetic work that should not be mistaken for reality. The same obviously applies to the entire Platonic dialogue, and in this way Plato responds to the first criticism of *Republic* 10. The *Phaedrus*, for example, already has the direct form of the original, but is not distinguished from it. In this sense, it is deceptive, just like images that conceal their nature as images pretending to be reality. The Socratic dialogues of Plato's youth, such as the *Crito*, are mostly direct.[54] Reading them out loud – or listening to them – is like being on the scene, like spectators of a movie who identify themselves with the story. But how is this possible? We were not in prison with Socrates! Μίμησις creates the illusion of being present, the illusion of proximity. But this is false.[55] Next come the narrative dialogues of Plato's mature period, for example the *Republic* and the *Symposium*. The new, indirect, form (the narration of a dialogue and no longer the simple dialogue), has the merit of disclosing that we are in front of a reproduction, a copy, which is thus no longer deceptive. This distant and mediated copy, however, is imperfect as such, because substantially dissimilar from the original and its direct nature. My hypothesis is then that the *Theaetetus* aims to recover the original form, but without the illusion of closeness. The external proem answers the charge of deception to the extent that the image declares itself as such, just as in the variations of the famous painting by Magritte, *La Trahison des images*, where he represented a pipe together with the declaration, also painted and therefore an integral part of the image, 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe': *this*, namely *this painting*, is not a pipe. The painting of the pipe is not a real pipe because it does not share its essence or function. The essence or function of a pipe is to smoke good English tobacco, but it is something that a picture of

54 According to the 'mobile chronology' proposed by C. Kahn: cf. Kahn (1996). Traditionally, the *Crito* is considered a youthful work, in any case, in this context it is only mentioned by way of example, and could be replaced by the *Euthyphro* or the *Ion*. See above, n. 42.

55 The following objection can easily be raised: how is this illusion really possible, even if today, in front of such realistic imitations as film, which I think would have elicited in Plato a profound and shocked interest, we never completely lose touch with reality? I am convinced that Plato did not mean this when he emphasised the power of μίμησις as identification, but that he wanted to insist on the consequences of μίμησις, namely the emulation that implicitly follows from ζῆλος aroused in him who identifies himself – consequences that, *mutatis mutandis*, remain valid still today. On this point, see Capuccino (2005) 137 ff. and *Ead.* (2011) 71 ff.

a pipe, however realistic, cannot do; in the case of Magritte, it declares this from within the image itself. The *Theaetetus* as a whole thus offers a better solution than the narrative dialogues, because, like a picture, it declares its nature as an image; and in addition it does so without betraying the nature of the object imitated. In other words, it retains the merits of μίμησις while eliminating its flaws. This device, exclusive to Plato's writing, makes the dialogues more worthy than their rival tragedies and comedies, which are direct as much as they are, but also deceptive.

(3) What then is the only way you can imitate a dialogue faithfully, namely by representing its essence and not its appearance? If the essence of the dialogue is the live and direct exchange between two interlocutors allowed by orality, the only way to preserve it is, paradoxically,[56] by taking it away from life by fixing it in writing. Only by writing a book, which is what Euclides[57] and Plato with him do, you can pass on the direct form that characterises the nature of the oral dialogue. Orality, on the contrary, is forced to spread it in an indirect form, through a series of narrations. The paradoxical proems therefore invite us to reflect not only on the relationship between the mimetic and the diegetic style of Plato's work, but, even more radically, on the relationship between oral and written transmission of philosophy.[58] The writing of Plato's dialogues is not only permissible but necessary, for the following reasons: it is the only way (a) *to reproduce* faithfully, that is, respecting the direct nature, and (b) *to preserve* faithfully, that is, in detail and without gaps, the oral σωκρατικοὶ λόγοι,

56 The paradoxical proems reflect the paradoxical nature of the form of writing that Plato decided to adopt with extreme awareness.

57 On the figure of Euclides as a writer and his relationship with Plato, see Capuccino (2014) 122 ff. Extremely interesting in this regard are also the analyses of Morgan (2003) esp. 112–113; Narcy (2013); Kaklamanou and Pavlou (2016).

58 According to Hua-Kuei Ho, Plato assigns a primary role to 'indirect form', understood as indirect transmission of philosophical λόγοι, both through orality narrative chains and writing (see. Ho [2011] 8: 'indirectness is inherent in writing'). Plato, ultimately, approves writing – at least the form that he himself adopts –, but writing can take in turn an indirect (i.e. narrative) or direct (i.e. dramatic or mimetic) form, and I think it is upon this alternative that the dialogues – which are all, without exception, written works – invite us to reflect. In a complementary way, Ho believes that Plato does not attribute any particular priority to direct form, quoting the passages in which Socrates denies that knowledge can be transmitted with only the physical proximity (proximity would therefore not be a sufficient condition; cf. e.g. *Symp*. 175d). This would suggest that a certain distance is required (that offered by oral narration and writing) in order to perform a personal philosophical work (*ibid*., 15–16). But, again, the reference to writing raises the question of its dual form, direct or indirect, by shifting the problem to another level, instead of solving it. See below, n. 62.

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speeches 'worthy' of being passed on, as the *Theaetetus*'s proem says (142c8-d1). Euclides' memory is not enough because it is fallible: had he not written down the story of Socrates by filling its gaps, we would not have known the Athenian dialogue just before his death. In this way, the proem responds at least partially to the first charge against writing in the *Phaedrus*.[59]

(4) The purpose of Platonic dialogues, the fact that Plato decided to write them, is not to tell us something, but to invite us to perform these dialogues anew for ourselves (the *Phaedrus* speaks of 'following the footsteps' of writing),[60] giving them new authentic voices, which is to say our living voices. By means of eliminating the voice of the narrator, at first glance Plato seems to want to 'clean' the dialogue of every particular and personal element, restoring in this way its universal character necessary for it to be useful for any reader. Without the intrusion of the narrator's subjective comments, we are alone *vis-à-vis* the original dialogue without running the risk of being influenced by his view. This move, however, has exactly the opposite purpose: not to *depersonalise* the dialogue, but to show us how Plato's philosophical dialogue is intimately *personal*. It has value, that is, for each of us, only when we become protagonists on a par with the characters represented, when our beliefs about ourselves and the world we live in are at stake. Only then will the dialogue again be direct, with one difference: it can no longer be a living dialogue with Socrates, who is no longer among the living, but will be 'living and animated' in the same sense in which the dialogue of the soul with itself is so, the silent dialogue in which thought consists.[61] According to Plato, we think in the form of questions and answers, the same that give life to the Socratic dialogue. His dialogue has as its ultimate goal, as a goal to strive for, the acquisition of knowledge, just like the activity of thought, and is therefore an excellent model for the right or good way of thinking. Since the dialogues are asymmetrical, the dominant role is assumed by Socrates, that is to say by someone who cannot transmit knowledge – Socrates famously professed not to be wise – but is able to formulate those questions that give rise to philosophical inquiry and constitute its value. Philosophical thought will have to grow by learning to

59 Outside the dialogical fiction, the Platonic dialogues faithfully reproduce and preserve the essence of the σωκρατικὸς λόγος, i.e. the *inimitable* model of philosophical dialogue (no subsequent philosophical dialogue is comparable to it) that comes with Socrates, and that without the Platonic dialogues, would have risked dying with him. Indeed, this would almost certainly have happened if, for example, only Xenophon's testimony had been preserved.

60 *Phdr*. 276d: the tracks (ἴχνη) have the function of ὑπομνήματα. Cf. *Phd*. 115b.

61 Cf. *Tht*. 189e-190a and *Soph*. 264a.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

internalise this role.[62] The proem thus responds to the second charge of the *Phaedrus*, against a writing which does not respond if questioned; it completes the response to the first allegation, that of writing as a poison to memory, and responds to the third charge against μίμησις in the *Republic*, by showing its usefulness.

6 Conclusion

To sum up the answers to several allegations, finally, the paradoxical proems, among which the *Theaetetus*' opening is undoubtedly the most emblematic,[63] respond with a 'self-defence' to the final appeal that Plato makes to mimetic poetry in *Republic* 10. It is the request to defend its nature *from the inside*, that is from within the mimetic form, an invitation that was never answered by the poets,[64] at the risk of being forgotten. Plato then decides to answer it himself, from within his mimetic *prose*;[65] in this way his prose shows its superiority and by the same token provides a paradigm, a model, for the benefit of the philosophers, but also poets of the future who, taking up the challenge, decide to put it in verse. By defending himself, that is by showing its good nature without the intervention of the author, the Platonic dialogue responds accordingly to the last accusation of the *Phaedrus*: the need for 'a father' who defends his written play from unjustified attacks and misunderstandings.

Plato's writing is diegetic-mimetic: this is a matter of fact, and the reason lies in Plato's aim of showing, through this composite mode, the relationships mentioned above between oral and written forms of philosophy. The emphasis, however, should not be placed on the diegetic component, but on the mimetic one. And in this case the reason lies in the last great paradox that surrounds Plato's writing: his anonymity. If by his choice we do not ever hear the author's voice directly, then the Platonic dialogues are fully mimetic works:[66]

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62 Plato seems to invite us to proximity and not to the distance, because the *proximity* he is thinking of is not physical closeness, but philosophical practice and the exercise of thought in the first person (see above, n. 58).

63 In particular, the *Theaetetus* is the culmination of a process of reflection on the transmission of philosophy created by the four paradoxical proems, and invites us to reflect directly on written transmission. See below n. 66.

64 See *Resp*. 10.607c ff.

65 In the early dialogue *De poetis*, Aristotle characterises Plato's style as 'midway between poetry and prose' (μεταξὺ ποιήματος εἶναι καὶ πεζοῦ λόγου, Diog. Laert. 3.37).

66 What should not be forgotten, in this reflection, is the difference between the dialogic fiction, which stages the relationships between the different narrative levels, and the author's point of view, which remains outside the fiction. Inside and outside can (indeed,

- 978-90-04-44399-0

in an important sense, *there is no author* behind διήγησις because Plato never intervenes in his written works either as a character or as narrator.[67] In short, the asymmetries between Socrates' narratological schema in *Republic* 3 and the various techniques used in Plato's own dialogues are undeniable:[68] ultimately the writing of Plato is entirely mimetic, as meaning that ἁπλῆ διήγησις does not appear at all (there are no dialogues that are wholly narrative), and even mixed διήγησις turns into μίμησις because the narrator is always the character of a dialogical scene and never coincides with the author's voice.[69] But I believe that this fact does not mean that the schema of the λέξις in *Republic* 3 is not applicable to Plato's dialogues. This controversial passage, along with the passage of the *Phaedrus* on writing, is in my view an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the expressive forms adopted in the fifth and fourth century B.C. (both the traditional as well as the new) from the point of view of the responsibility of λόγος, which is what Plato holds most dear. The dialogues do not seem to me, then, the practical application of those precepts – in which case Plato would not have had to write at all, and certainly not in a mimetic form – but rather his personal response to the defects that he found in those forms, while preserving their strengths.

In other words, Plato was able to construct a kind of writing and an expressive style that saves the merits of μίμησις without embracing its flaws, starting with the protection of that anonymity which, for him, was a serious matter, and a sign of a responsible writing. For Plato, the only responsible writing is anonymous writing, which cannot be produced as mute witness to justify actions

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in my opinion, they must: what is internal in some way refers to what is external) be related, but without confusing them with one another.

67 Plato cannot achieve this result, in an indirect and allusive way, by entrusting it to a single dialogue, but he needs the reading path that is offered by a *corpus* of works. If, for example, in some dialogues we are tempted to attribute to Socrates the function of being a spokesman of Platonic philosophy, other dialogues are constructed so as to insinuate doubt that this is appropriate, within a refined self-regulating system. In my view, the paradoxical proems contain the map for following this path.

68 Socrates equates the narrative voice in ἁπλῆ διήγησις (and likewise the narrative element in διήγησις δι' ἀμφοτέρων) with the author's own persona, not with a speaking character, which is rather what we always find in Plato's narrative dialogues: this appears to lead to a real hermeneutic challenge.

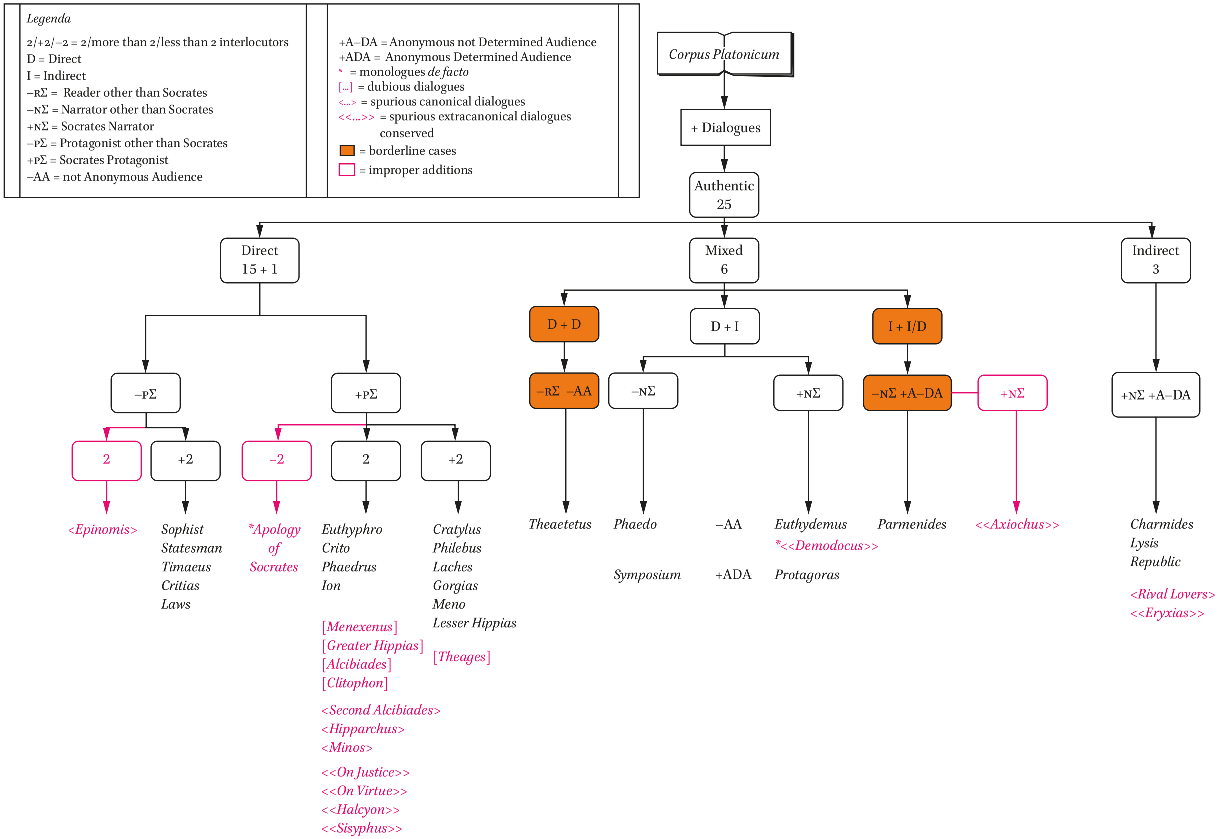
69 From this point of view, the distinctions among narrators as 'heterodiegetic' (absent from the story told, as in the case of Apollodorus in the *Symposium*), 'homodiegetic' (present in the story being told, as in that of Aristodemus in the *Symposium* or Phaedo in the eponymous dialogue) and 'autodiegetic' (present as a protagonist, like Socrates in the *Protagoras* or the *Republic*) become irrelevant, because they apply only within the dialogical fiction. For the technical terminology, see Genette (1972) 252–253.

and behaviours according to the traditional *principle of authority* (a practice against which his Socrates openly takes sides in the dialogues),[70] weakening the sense of responsibility of his listeners (or readers) and atrophying their capacity for judgment; a writing that, at one and the same time, is also able to preserve the role, which had been the characteristic role of Socrates while still alive, of inimitable stimulus to critical thinking, that is, to thinking and speaking *with your own voice*. Paradoxically, the very absence of the author's voice, which was declared in *Republic* 3 to be the best form of expression, is after all what leaves a space open for any individual voice: a necessary sacrifice to ensure that anyone who so wishes may finally become *the author of his own life*.

70 See, for example, *Prt*. 347e and *Leg*. 1.638c-d. Cf. Capuccino (2005) 202–203, 213, 235. Halliwell rightly observes that in the second book of the *Republic* Plato also attributed to Homer passages of the poems where it is the characters who speak, and not the narrator (e.g. 2.379c-d; cf. Halliwell [2009] 22). According to the analysis of the third book, in those passages Homer speaks deceptively, hiding his own voice. What is crucial is the very fact that they are still attributed to him, citing him as an authority, and this is possible only because behind those verses, just as behind the verses of tragedies and comedies (e.g. *Grg*. 484e), there is always a *declared* (and not merely recognisable) author. In my opinion, Plato wants to be a *writer*, but not an *author* (in a proper sense, his dialogues are not 'works', [συγ]γράμματα; Aristotle never quotes them as such), and to achieve this, he has to sacrifice his name, becoming a kind of *ghostwriter*. For a bibliography on anonymity and on the figure of the author in antiquity, see Capuccino (2014) 321, 324. I would recommend, in particular, Kilito (1985) and Nannini (2010).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Appendix: 'Scenic' Classification



CHAPTER 4

The Prologue of the *Charmides*

Luc Brisson

Plato, it seems, began to write after the trial and death of Socrates in 399. Like Xenophon in the *Memorabilia*,[1] he wished to exculpate Socrates, who was accused of having accepted into his circle the men responsible for the misfortunes that had just befallen Athens: its defeats in Sicily and against Sparta, and the civil war.

At the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, in 431/430, Athens had 60,000 citizens, adult males, without taking women, children, resident foreigners (metics) and slaves into consideration. One year later, in 430/429, the plague broke out: it killed 20,000 citizens, among them Pericles the *strategos*, the highest authority in the city. In 412, moreover, combats, particularly those leading up to the disastrous Sicilian expedition, were responsible for the death of 17,000 citizens. Finally, in 404, after a siege that caused 3,000 deaths, Athens surrendered. Sparta then imposed an oligarchic regime, giving power to the Thirty Tyrants, who ordered many executions, and who fell in 403 after violent combats; 1,500 citizens died in this tumult. In 403, when peace and democracy were re-established, Athens was home to no more than between 25,000 and 30,000 citizens, taking into account population growth during this quarter-century.[2]

This is the context in which Socrates' trial must be re-situated. He had accepted into his circle not only Alcibiades, the main instigator of the Sicilian campaign, who had ended up fleeing to Athens' enemies Sparta and Persia, but also Critias, the fiercest member of the Thirty Tyrants, and Plato's uncle, Charmides, an active supporter of the Thirty. Following the amnesty of 403, accusations involving political charges could no longer be filed. As I tried to show in the introductions to my translations of the *Apology* and the *Crito*,[3] the motive for the charges against Socrates was political, and concerned his links with Alcibiades, on the one hand, and Critias and Charmides on the other. Since the amnesty law of 403 made any prosecution for political motives impossible, a charge was fabricated *ad hoc*.

1 Dorion (2000).
2 Brulé and Descat (2004).
3 Brisson (2005b).

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At the end of the *Symposium*, Plato gives a description of Socrates' relations with Alcibiades that is intended to free his master from blame, while in the *Charmides*, he shows to what extent Socrates' influence on Critias and Charmides could have been beneficial, if they had been persuaded by Socrates to know themselves. Probably written between 399 and 388, the *Charmides* opens with a long prologue (153a-158e), a magnificent piece from a literary viewpoint and, in which we find the themes of the dialogue; care of the soul leading to σωφροσύνη, understood as mastery on every level, including sexual: 'In traditional Greek ethics, where it is crucially important, σωφροσύνη designates a healthy mind; that is, a healthy intellectual disposition that allows a person to judge correctly, to exhibit self-mastery, wisdom, reserve, and restraint.'[4] Let us set the stage.

Socrates has returned from Potidaea the preceding evening. Potidaea, a city of Chalcidice (in northern Greece) and colony of Corinth, had maintained its links with its metropolis, despite its alliance with Athens. In 433, the Athenians, to ensure Potidaea's loyalty, ordered the city to cut all its links with Corinth. When Potidaea refused, after receiving from the Lacedaemonians the promise that they would come to its assistance, it defected, together with other cities of the area. Athens then sent a thousand hoplites, among whom was Socrates, to lay siege to the city, which did not fall until the winter of 430/429. These events marked the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. Athens had won, but under difficult conditions (*Chrm.* 153b9-c1), and at a high cost, since Callias,[5] who was the commander of the Athenian expeditionary force, had perished in the conflict, and since Alcibiades, wounded, only managed to save his life thanks to the friendship and the courage of Socrates (*Symp.* 220d-e).

When Socrates uses the expression 'after so much time spent away' (153a) he probably means that he has just spent nearly three years before the besieged city. We would therefore be in 429, at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, at the time when the plague was about to break out, and before Plato's birth. Socrates, who is about forty,[6] goes to the gymnasium of Taureas, which was opposite the temple of the Queen.[7] He is met by Chaerephon,[8] who seats him

4 Dorion (2004) 18; see also Hazebroucq (1997).
5 On Callias, cf. Brisson (1994b) 162–163.
6 One can assume that Socrates was born around 469, according to *Apology* 17d2-3 and *Crito* 52e3. For a highly elaborate analysis of these texts, see O' Brien (1994) 664–666.
7 The exact location of this palaestra still constitutes a problem for archaeologists.
8 This is the Chaerephon who would question the oracle of Apollo at Delphi (*Ap.* 21a).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

next to Critias.[9] We learn that the latter is the tutor of Charmides,[10] who, if he was born around 450, is about 20 years old. Since his cousin is his tutor, all indications are that his father, Glaucon, was dead at the time. Socrates is dazzled by Charmides' beauty (*Chrm.* 154a-c). Like everyone around him, Socrates acknowledges that Charmides' beauty is extraordinary (ὑπερφυῶς). Yet it is not his body that Socrates would like to see undressed, but his soul, in order to verify that, according to the Greek ideal, he is, in Critias' words, 'beautiful and good' (καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός 154e4). This is one of the themes of the dialogue. The care of the body is inseparable from the care of the soul, which must always be granted priority (*Chrm.* 155b-e).

Yet Socrates is a man, and he cannot remain insensible to the boy's physical beauty (*Chrm.* 155b-e). The age difference between Socrates and Charmides would make possible a relation of the *paiderastia* type. In order to understand the originality of what was called *paiderastia* in Archaic and Classical Greece, which had almost the rank of an institution in well-off circles of Athenian society, certain peculiarities must be mentioned. *Paiderastia* implies a relation, in which sex is involved, not between two adult males, but between an adult (*eron* or *erastes*) and a *pais. Pais* designated a young boy situated in an age class beginning around the age of puberty, until the appearance of the first beard.[11] Beyond the satisfaction of sexual desire and the search for certain affection, what could well have been the use of *paiderastia* in ancient Greece? It seems that in Classical Athens, sexual relations between an adult and a young boy could have a social role, directly or indirectly: the adult had the task of facilitating the boy's entry into the masculine society that led the city on a cultural, economic and political level. *Paiderastia* thus had a social and educational role; hence all the remarks and discussions on the usefulness (*chreia*) of homosexual relations one finds in Plato, particularly in the *Phaedrus* (in the first speech 230e-235c) and in the *Symposium* (for example, the couple of Agathon and Pausanias).[12] However, according to the testimony of Alcibiades at the end of the *Symposium* (222a7-b2) Socrates refuses to embark upon this

9 Critias was not a sophist, as he is presented in DK, but an aristocratic Athenian who was one of the Thirty Tyrants. He was killed when the oligarchs were defeated at Munichia in 403. On Critias, see Brisson (1994d) 512–520.

10 Charmides was Glaucon's son by the sister of Pyrilampes, who was to become the second husband of Plato's mother; he was thus Plato's uncle. Although he does not seem to have been one of the Thirty Tyrants (see the list in Xenophon, *Hell.* 2.3.2), he seems to have been close to them, for he was killed, like Critias, at the battle of Munichia in 403. On Charmides, see Brisson (1994c) 299–302.

11 Xen. *An.* 7.4.7.

12 Brisson (2006) 229–251.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

kind of relationship with Charmides. A little before in his speech, Alcibiades describes how he himself failed trying to seduce Socrates (*Symp.* 219b-d). In the presence of beautiful young men, then, Socrates is able to control himself, for over the beauty of the body, he prefers the beauty of the soul, to which he devotes all his concern.

To please the handsome young man, who had complained of headaches that very morning to his tutor Critias, Socrates declares that he knows how to cure him:

SOCRATES: And I said that it was a certain leaf (φύλλον τι), and that there was an incantation (ἐπῳδή) to go with the remedy (ἐπὶ τῷ φαρμάκῳ). If one sang the incantation while applying the leaf, the remedy would bring about a complete cure, but without the incantation the leaf was useless (ἄνευ δὲ τῆς ἐπῳδῆς οὐδὲν ὄφελος εἴη τοῦ φύλλου; *Chrm.* 155e5-8, trans. Sprague with modifications).

Evoking a kind of medicine to which he alludes at the end of the *Phaedrus* (270b), according to which one cannot heal the body without healing the soul, Socrates proposes to Charmides a remedy which he associates with an incantation.

I believe that these are indeed two indo-european therapeutic modes.[13] Whereas it is possible for a contemporary to imagine what a remedy (τὸ φάρμακον) made out of a leaf (φύλλον τι) consists in, it is not easy to understand what an incantation (ἐπῳδή) can correspond to. If one considers things from the viewpoint of etymology, one can imagine that the incantation was a formula including a few words that were sung or modulated.[14] Although it pertains to the invisible, the incantation (ἐπῳδή) is endowed with real power in the realm of the visible. Moreover, Plato associated it with magic in this definition, found in the *Euthydemus*, which evokes the power of incantation over wild animals and illnesses: 'For the art of incantations (τῶν ἐπῳδῶν), consists in charming (κήλησις) vipers and spiders and scorpions and other wild beasts (θηρίων) and in curing diseases (νόσων)' (*Euthd.* 290a1-3, trans. Sprague, with modifications).

The influence of the incantation over wild animals seems to me to be at the basis of Plato's assimilation of myth to incantation in many passages of the Platonic corpus.[15] Myth addresses the lowest species of the human

13 See Brisson (2005a).

14 ἐπῳδή is a compound of ἐπι- and ᾠδή. ᾠδή means 'song', and the prefix ἐπί means that the action accomplished is 'in favour of'.

15 *Phd.* 77d5-78a2, 114d1-7; *Leg.* 2.659e1-5, 10.887c7-d5, 10.903a7-b3.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

soul, the desiring species (ἐπιθυμία), which is compared to a wild beast in the *Timaeus.*[16] Because it has an influence on illnesses, moreover, the incantation must be considered a therapeutic means in the context of medicine.

The remedy evoked by Socrates in the *Charmides* allows him to introduce several ideas. It is man in his entirety, body and soul, who must be cured, just as it is impossible to cure only a part of the body, and a part of the soul or a particular soul. Whereas the medicine is derived from a leaf, the incantation consists in words; hence this admirable introduction to the whole of the *Charmides*, placed in the mouth of a Thracian doctor.

It is impossible to determine precisely what Socrates means by 'soul' (ψυχή) in the *Charmides*. At the least, however, he had to accept the conception held of it by the Thracian doctor. It must be a reality distinct from the body; and when the body is destroyed, the soul survives and goes to Zalmoxis, and when it is associated with the body, it seems that the soul has an action on it, albeit mediated though incantation.

Socrates takes his inspiration from the Thracian doctor, who promises to cure the body and ensure the soul's immortality by incantations that are equivalent to magical practice: 'Well Charmides, it is just the same with this incantation. I learned it while I was with the army, from one of the Thracian doctors of Zalmoxis,[17] who are also said to make men immortal' (156d3-6, trans. Sprague).[18] Yet, Socrates takes his distance from magic by defining incantation differently, and giving it another goal: 'It is a result of such words that temperance arises in the soul (ἐκ δὲ τῶν τοιούτων λόγων ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς σωφροσύνην ἐγγίγνεσθαι 156a5-6), and when the soul acquires and possesses temperance, it is easy to provide health both for the head and for the rest of the body'. The point is now to cure the soul by means of those fine discourses that cause 'wisdom', understood as temperance or 'moderation' (σωφροσύνη) to be born in it. 'And the soul, he said, my dear friend, is cured (θεραπεύεσθαι δὲ τὴν ψυχήν) by means of certain incantations (ἐπῳδαῖς τισιν), and these incantations consist of fine discourses (τὰς δ' ἐπῳδὰς ταύτας τοὺς λόγους εἶναι τοὺς καλούς)' (*Chrm.* 157a, trans. Sprague, with modifications). Once again, Socrates embeds philosophy

16 *Ti.* 70d7-e5. On this cf. Brisson (1994a) 95–101.

17 According to Herodotus (4.94–96), Zalmoxis was a Thracian god or a 'demon', who taught that 'neither he, nor his guests, nor their descendants for all time would die, but that they would go to a place where they would always survive, and would enjoy complete happiness' (4.95).

18 The verb ἀπαθανατίζειν, here translated by 'to make immortal', is a *hapax* in Plato; hence some uncertainty with regard to its precise meaning.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

within a religious practice, which he transforms to the point of making it unrecognisable. In this prologue, therefore, one moves from the body to the soul, and to wisdom, a virtue of the soul, by way of the incantation, whose origin is, of course, religious, but which is transposed onto a philosophical level in Plato.

In the *Charmides*, Socrates seeks a definition of wisdom conceived as moderation. Two series of definitions are advanced, one by Charmides, and the other by Critias:

I) Charmides' definitions
 Definition 1: calm (158e-160d)
 Definition 2: modesty (160d-161b)
 Definition 3: minding one's own business (161b-162b)

II) Critias' definitions
 Definition 3: taken up again (162c-163d)
 Definition 4: doing good (163d-164d)
 Definition 5: self-knowledge (164d-166c)
 Definition 6: knowledge of knowledge as such and of other sciences (166c-175a)

The prologue announces the definition of wisdom set forth by Socrates at the end of the dialogue:

> Then only the temperate man will know himself and will be able to examine what he knows and does not know, and in the same way he will be able to inspect other people to see when a man does in fact know what he knows and thinks he knows, and when again he does not know what he thinks he knows, and no one else will be able to do this. And being temperate and temperance and knowing oneself amount to this, to knowing what one knows and does not know. Or isn't this what you say? (*Chrm.* 167a1-4, trans. Sprague)

As we have seen, Socrates attributes to incantations, defined as 'fine discourses', the power to engender wisdom in the soul. These fine discourses are the ones mobilised by refutation (ἔλεγχος), which can be defined as a dialectical discussion between a questioner and a respondent. Refutation is a two-stage process. Socrates first refutes the person he is questioning. On the basis of the propositions he has granted, he brings his interlocutor to accept propositions that contradict the ones he had accepted. This refutation produces a feeling of shame in the respondent, which is not sought for its own sake, but is intended to call his opinions into question, and hence induce him to seek the truth through self-knowledge. The only positive knowledge that can enable

this goal to be achieved is the knowledge of good and evil, the last definition of the dialogue. It is thus a universal science that contains all sciences, a science of sciences. For Socrates, this is an architectonic knowledge that is able to determine for other sciences the goals they must pursue. Yet Critias does not understand, for he thinks this wisdom is a universal knowledge that includes all other knowledge.

To conclude, one finds in the opening of the *Charmides* all the themes developed in the dialogue. The care of the body is inseparable from the care of the soul, which must always be granted priority. The soul is immortal and has to be cured by incantations. These incantations for Socrates, consist in dialogues, and more precisely in refutations intended to call the interlocutor's opinions into question, and hence induce him to seek the truth through self-knowledge.

Unable to understand Socrates' message, Critias drags Charmides into the tyranny, and finally to death during the defeat at Munichia. Neither can they exhibit wisdom understood as self-mastery, for they do not know themselves. Socrates, in contrast, knows how to master himself, for he knows that what defines a human being is his soul. What interests him in beautiful boys is thus not the body, even though he is caught in fire seeing in the cloak of Charmides, but the soul. In politics, he does not seek any office that is not imposed on him by his status as a citizen. He is, in a way, the example of the wisdom he tries to defend in the *Charmides*. This is what the prologue to the *Charmides* makes manifest.

Translation, Michael Chase

- 978-90-04-44399-0

CHAPTER 5

Elenctic *Aporia* and Performative *Euporia*

Literary Form and Philosophical Message

Michael Erler

1 Drama and Argument

Argument and literary form, and how they relate to each other, are important aspects for any interpretation of the Platonic dialogues. Plato 'the author' and Plato 'the philosopher' always work hand in hand; the author tries to serve the philosopher in his effort to persuade those who have difficulties accepting the results of abstract philosophical arguments. The dramatic structure and the historical settings of the dialogues form part of this strategy of philosophical rhetoric. Therefore, it is both appropriate and legitimate to embark on the study of Plato's philosophy by asking how Plato's literary art of writing could support his philosophical message and, for instance, to consider what this relation means in view of Plato's critique of writing or in the context of the debate about developmentalism versus unitarianism in Plato's philosophy.[1] A characteristic trait of Platonic *socraticoi logoi* is that Plato is concerned to involve historical individuals and to place them in historical settings.[2] Plato uses these frames not only in order to entertain the reader, but primarily to illustrate the philosophic concepts which are discussed in the conversations he reports, and – as I argue – to comment on the problems that arise. Sometimes dramatic aspects of the dialogues affirm or contradict what is argued for in the dialogue, and sometimes they open up new perspectives.

In this chapter I assert that this is also true for the dialogues whose end is disappointing because the problems raised in the course of the discussion remain unresolved and seem – at least at first glance – to have no way out (*aporos*). As I try to show, Plato indicates that this disappointment might be overcome. I claim that the frames of the dialogues, that is the historical settings, the fictive chronology suggested by these settings and the performance of the characters play an important role in this respect. My thesis is that these

1 Cf. Erler (2015).
2 Cf. Erler (2009).

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frames often provide cues which are conducive to a better understanding of the dialogues' main discussion. I mainly focus on the *Protagoras* and the *Euthyphro*, but I also refer to the *Apology*, trying to demonstrate that Plato uses the fictitious chronology not only as a literary strategy but also as a signal that the *Apology* can be read as a frame for the *Euthyphro* and function as a comment on problems raised there. With this approach I hope to contribute to the ongoing discussion about the endings of literary works in antiquity in general and of the Platonic dialogues in particular.[3]

2 Socrates' Performance as a 'Dramatic' Commentary

The *Phaedo* serves as an example of a frame that can be read as a comment on the dialogue's philosophical content.[4] A salient motif in this dialogue is the trust and distrust in the *logos* (that is the arguments offered by Socrates to prove the immortality of the soul) expressed by the dialogue partners. This trust or distrust is illustrated by the behaviour of the interlocutors. On some occasions they contend that they agree with the arguments offered by Socrates in order to prove the immortality of the soul. On other occasions they concede that they had not been persuaded that the result is true.

Although Socrates' partners Simmias and Cebes accept that most of his arguments are coherent, at the end doubts remain. Of course, Socrates' last argument is accepted by Cebes. Likewise, Simmias does not see how he could doubt the outcome of the discussion.[5] Nevertheless, Simmias confesses that he is still sceptical about what had been said, because the subject is so great and human nature so weak.[6] Interestingly, Socrates does not counter this remark, but agrees that the assumptions of the arguments should be more carefully re-examined.[7] He even reckons with the possibility that there might be more arguments to be produced by his partners. Consequently, doubts prevail. Small wonder – one should say – because the thesis that the soul of man is immortal was not common currency during Plato's time, as Socrates himself confesses in the *Republic*.[8] Therefore, Simmias' insecurity might mirror the feelings of the reader. Socrates, on the other side, obviously does not share these doubts. For

3 Cf. Fowler (1989); see the discussions in Roberts et al. (1997).
4 Cf. Gallop (2001) esp. 281.
5 Cf. *Phd*. 107a-b.
6 Cf. *Phd*. 85c.
7 Cf. Heitsch (2001) esp. 95.
8 Cf. *Resp*. 608d; see Arist. *Soph. el.* 17.176b16 ff.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

all participants in the conversation consent that, in spite of awaiting the death penalty, Socrates seems to be a happy person – *eudaimon*. Furthermore, all agree that Socrates' positive disposition derives from his confidence that after death his soul will enjoy a pleasant existence; Socrates is convinced that his soul is immortal. Phaedo does not merely report on how Socrates argued for the immortality of the soul, but he also refers to how Socrates behaved at such a strained and difficult situation.[9] Thus Socrates' happiness is underscored in the *Phaedo* from start to finish.[10]

It is the performance of the figure of Socrates, as it is described at the end of the dialogue but also during the conversation, which should and could be understood as evidence or a kind of proof that, despite the distrust in the argument, its conclusion – the immortality of the soul – should be accepted as true and that the philosophical arguments put forward by Socrates must be valid. Otherwise – as his partners believe – he would not behave as he does. I therefore argue that the historical setting of the *Phaedo* and the performance of Socrates, as described by Plato the author, function as a kind of comment on the philosophical discourse.[11] The frame of the dialogue serves as a means to persuade both the participants and the readers even in case the arguments might have disappointed them.

3 Dead End and Openness

In what follows I wish to offer more examples to show how the frames of some dialogues offer clues to the reader to understand better their philosophical messages. To do so I have chosen the dialogues *Euthyphro* and *Protagoras*. Both dialogues illustrate conversations about moral questions – piety and the question of the unity of virtues – which seem to lead to an end which is aporetic or at least puzzling.[12] Every reader of the so-called aporetic dialogues (like the *Euthyphro*) who hopes to gain some information about, for instance, what 'piety' (*to hosion*) really is will be frustrated. Many questions remain and no positive outcomes are presented. In his attempt to follow the argument of the conversation in aporetic dialogues such as the *Euthyphro* and the *Protagoras* the reader at the end will face a situation which Aristotle describes in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: 'Hence the inference that results is a puzzle; for thought is tied

9 Cf. *Phd.* 58c.
10 Cf. *Phd.* 58e, 117c.
11 Cf. Erler (2009) 25.
12 For the *Euthyphro* cf. Forschner (2013) 175–190.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

up, whenever it does not want to stand still, because the conclusion is displeasing, but it cannot advance, because it cannot solve the argument'.[13]

Many passages show that this feeling is shared by the participants in the conversation itself as described by Plato in the frames of the dialogues. And their confusion certainly mirrors the feeling of the readers. In the *Euthydemus*, Socrates himself comments on the helplessness he and Cleinias experience at the end of their dispute, where he declares that he and his partner thought that they had come to the end, but that they turned round again and reappeared practically at the beginning of the search in just as much trouble as when they had started out.[14] 'Trying to catch the knowledge and failing to get hold of it' time and again occurs as a motif in the aporetic dialogues. The *Euthyphro*, for instance, offers a definition of what piety is, but this definition is refuted time and again. Euthyphro is extremely puzzled and complains that his proposals 'go around in circles' and 'do not stand still'. Socrates does not accept the charge of being guilty in making those *logoi* move around as Daedalus did. He insists that the *logos* itself ran away. He himself would rather prefer a stable *logos* that would not run away all the time.[15] From an argumentative point of view, it seems that dialogues like the *Euthyphro* could be regarded as closed in the sense that nothing more could be said about the problem.

4 Frame and Openness

A close interpretation of the frames of the dialogues, especially of their endings, reveals that Plato the author offers cues to the reader that it might be useful to continue the discussion. Plato suggests that dialogues like the *Euthyphro* do end, but do not conclude; their endings open up and reveal a variety of perspectives.[16] Sometimes, for instance, the discussions in aporetic dialogues seem to refuse to come to a positive conclusion; the characters cease speaking and the dialogue ends. Often the subject-matter of the conversation, for which a solution could not be reached, is postponed for another occasion. Thus, the end of the dialogues indicates to the reader that the discussion is still open and that there might be hope. The frame of dialogues like the *Euthyphro* or the *Protagoras* also offer clues that enable a better understanding of what is

13 Cf. Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 7.2 1146a24; trans. Irwin (1999a) 101.
14 Cf. *Euthd.* 291b.
15 As to the function of the *aporiai* in Plato's dialogues cf. Erler (1987) 259–267 and for the *Euthyphro* 145–169; for a different point of view cf. Politis (2015).
16 Cf. Clay (2000) 165.

meant by ‘postponement’. In the *Euthyphro* the question on piety cannot be answered in a way that satisfies Socrates. Euthyphro finally gives up and declares that he should postpone this discussion. Before leaving Socrates, he says he has to go because of an appointment.[17] The same happens in the *Protagoras*.[18] At the end of this dialogue, Protagoras praises Socrates for his pursuit of wisdom despite the negative results of their conversation. But with regret – it seems – Protagoras excuses himself from further discussions: ‘[N]ow it’s time to turn to something else’, he says,[19] suggesting that he is willing and feels able to discuss the matter further, but just has no time – and therefore wishes to leave it as it is. This kind of ending, which suggests that more could be said and a positive result might finally be reached, is to be observed in other dialogues as well. Sometimes Socrates promises that he and his partners will meet again for another discussion, sometimes he recommends that his partners should look for better teachers than himself and sends them off to the sophists.[20] To ‘postpone or leave a discussion’ is a literary *topos* which is used by Plato not only at the end of discussions. In other dialogues Socrates’ partners leave not at the end, but before the discussion even starts, and after they have proposed their thesis as Philebus does in the *Philebus*; in fact, this *topos* is also employed by other writers such as Plutarch or Bacon, as indicated in his essay titled ‘Of Truth’.[21] When at the end of a conversation Socrates sends his partners away to the sophists because they might profit more from their expertise, this, of course, is not to be taken seriously, but signals to the reader that the person is just hopeless as a partner for philosophical search. Accordingly, it indicates that the discussion might have been successful had there been a better partner to discuss with. This possibility is illustrated in the *Republic*, where the conversation with Thrasymachus first ends up in *aporia*, but then continues in a more positive way with different partners like Glaucon and Adeimantus. Thus, there is a serious chance, and the discussion remains open despite the aporetic endings. This is signalled by the endings as described in the *Protagoras* or in the *Euthyphro*, which also indicate that, whereas the written dialogues might have an end, this does not necessarily mean that the discussion is also concluded.

As I argue, however, the frames of the *Euthyphro* and the *Protagoras* do not merely suggest that it might be worth pursuing the issue further. They also indicate to the reader that it might be worthwhile to reassess the argument

17 Cf. *Euthphr*. 15e.
18 Cf. Dalfen (2012) 170.
19 Cf. *Prt*. 361e. Translation of the *Protagoras* is from Allen (1996).
20 See, for instance, the end of *Laches*; cf. Erler (1987) 115–120.
21 Cf. *Phlb*. 11a-d; Plut. *De sera num*. 548a-b.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

put forward in these dialogues and to check whether the dialogues must really end up in an *aporia*. It is noteworthy that in the frame of the *Protagoras* Plato interprets the motif of postponement of a discussion warning the reader that this behaviour might signal a kind of openness, but also indicating that to just interrupt and resume a discussion whenever it suits the partners is not appropriate for a philosopher. The frame indicates the kind of behaviour that is really suitable for philosophical discourse. At the beginning of the *Protagoras*, we are told that Socrates and Hippocrates were approaching the house of Callias in order to meet with Protagoras; we are also told that an argument (*logos*) occurred to Socrates and that he insisted on discussing the issue till the end: 'When we arrived at the front door, we stood and discussed an argument which occurred to us on the way; so in order that it might not be unfinished but settled, we stood in front of the door before we went in discussing until we reached agreement'.[22]

'To finish with the *logos*': this is what Socrates always expects from his partners and from himself to do and this is what he in fact does when he discusses a problem. In the *Symposium*, we are told that on his way to the house of Agathon, Socrates starts thinking about an argument (*logos*) and refuses to enter the house before he has finished this argument with himself; he does so, in spite of keeping the other guests waiting.[23] To finish with a *logos* before doing anything else: Socrates' behaviour as described at the beginning of the *Protagoras* comments on what Protagoras does at the end of the very dialogue. That is, Plato interprets a literary *topos* often used by himself as the author. He is warning the reader that postponement of discussions rarely helps and that a real philosopher like Socrates behaves otherwise. Therefore, Socrates' behaviour at the beginning of the *Protagoras* should be understood as a comment on Protagoras' behaviour at the end. It clarifies that, from a Socratic perspective, postponement might signal a kind of openness, which, however, cannot guarantee that a solution to the problems raised in the dialogue is really possible. Accordingly, it appears that the frame of the *Protagoras* illustrates two different kinds of behaviour: one which is acceptable for a philosopher, another which is not. By this means, the dramatic action of the frame contributes to the discussion in the main dialogue. For in the course of the lively discussion of the *Protagoras* important aspects of the philosophical problems, but also of philosophical methodology, come to the fore. For instance, it is discussed whether one should prefer *mythos* to *logos*; or a monologue, as Protagoras prefers, to a

22 Cf. *Prt.* 314c.
23 Cf. *Symp.* 174d-175c.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

search for truth in a 'question and answer game', as Socrates practises it. Seen from this perspective, it becomes clear that the frame and the behaviour of the protagonists form part of the dialogue's philosophical message.

5 'Read the Text Again'

But the literary frames of both the *Euthyphro* and the *Protagoras* have even more to offer and to explain as to what openness really means. As I propose, Plato the author further indicates in the frames of the two aforementioned dialogues that it is worthwhile not only to pursue the discussion, but also to reconsider the arguments proposed in the two dialogues.

5.1 Protagoras

In this dialogue Socrates' conversation with Protagoras ends up in confusion. At the end, Socrates' narrative closes with one sentence: 'Saying and hearing these things, we departed', he tells the reader.[24] Upon a careful reading of the last sentence, the reader should be surprised by one single word. He or she might ask themselves who is meant by 'we'.[25] Focussing on the frame of the dialogue and Socrates' account, the reader will remember that Socrates narrates how he met with Hippocrates and how *they* went to the house of Callias, how *they* stopped in front of the house and had a conversation, how *they* knocked on the door and how *they* met with Protagoras. All this suggests, that the 'we' featuring at the end of Socrates' narrative – which coincides with the end of the dialogue as a whole – refers to Socrates and Hippocrates.[26] The last sentence of the dialogue informs us that Socrates and Hippocrates left Callias' house together, which means that Socrates and Hippocrates left

24 Cf. *Prt*. 362a.

25 Cf. Dalfen (1979/80=2012) 151–170, esp. 48 f. 158.

26 Cf. Manuwald (1999) 450; Denyer (2008) 204. Doubts might arise, because at 362a4 Socrates mentions that 'we said and heard' during the conversation. Considering that during the discussion at Callias' house Hippocrates remains silent throughout, Alcibiades has been suggested as another option. But he arrived later than Socrates at Callias' house (316a), whereas Socrates and Hippocrates came together. At the beginning Hippocrates declared that he wanted to become a pupil of Protagoras, whereas Alcibiades is on the side of Socrates from the beginning of the discussion. To learn, then, that Hippocrates is also leaving Protagoras, would be a strong statement about Protagoras as teacher. This is not to deny that the last sentence of the dialogue is somewhat ambiguous, as is the case with the end of the *Euthyphro*, on which see below. However, it is more attractive to consider Hippocrates as the one implied by the 'we'.

Protagoras. This comes as a surprise, considering that at the opening of the dialogue we were informed that Hippocrates was determined to become a pupil of Protagoras and that he pleaded with Socrates to introduce him to the sophist. In fact, on their way to Callias' house, Socrates and Hippocrates had a discussion on what it means to be a pupil of a sophist. What is more, it was Hippocrates' desire to learn from Protagoras that stimulated Socrates' discussion with Protagoras about the teachability and the unity of virtues in the presence of Hippocrates. Although Hippocrates does not contribute to the discussion and rather functions as a *kophon prosopon*, the reader is reminded by Socrates 'that Hippocrates is present.[27] Thus, Plato the author provides hints that help the reader to understand that Socrates' 'we' includes Hippocrates and, by extension, to realise that Hippocrates has changed his mind – obviously he has decided not to study with Protagoras.[28] Plato wants the reader to wonder why this is the case and to speculate that, despite their failure, the arguments must have had some effect on Hippocrates. Maybe they are more valid than it seems at first sight. The reader will realise that Plato the author wishes to suggest to the reader that it might be worthwhile to reconsider what has already been said – that is to read the dialogue again. The frame of the dialogue and the *topoi* applied suggest that this might be rewarding.

5.2 Euthyphro

A similar observation can be made about the *Euthyphro*,[29] if one casts a look at the end of the dialogue. When the conversation comes to an end, Euthyphro excuses himself declaring that he is in a hurry: 'Right now I must hurry somewhere (*poi*) and I am already late'.[30] The adverb *poi* is, indeed, remarkable if we remember that the dramatic setting of the conversation is the hall of the King-Archon, the magistrate responsible for religious matters.[31] Socrates is summoned there in order to oppose the indictment of Meletus which he then refutes in his defence-speech (*Apology*). Euthyphro was heading towards the office of the *archon basileus* because – as he tells Socrates – he decided to indict his own father for the murder of a day-labourer.[32] For Euthyphro his position as a priest qualifies him to know what piety is and justifies his behaviour. Thus, he has already arrived where he wanted to be. This understanding of the

27 Cf. *Prt*. 328d.
28 Cf. Dalfen (2012) 158 f.
29 Cf. Erler (2007) 128–132; Forschner (2013).
30 Cf. *Euthphr*. 15e; trans. Allen (1984) 58.
31 Cf. *Euthphr*. 2a.
32 Cf. *Euthphr*. 4a.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

closing words of the dialogue, of course, presupposes that the conversation takes place *before* Euthyphro enters the hall to make the indictment. And this is how, for instance, Diogenes Laertius[33] and some modern interpreters[34] understand the situation. Others,[35] however, maintain that this is not supported by the text. I agree that Plato does not specify whether Euthyphro has entered the hall. Yet, there is no strong evidence that the conversation takes place after Euthyphro has left the hall either. Obviously, Plato leaves it to the reader to decide how to read the passage. In view of what we have observed in the *Protagoras*, I suggest that we should concur with Diogenes Laertius, who argued that Euthyphro had changed his mind. As in the *Protagoras*, the reader will once again wonder and feel invited to read the dialogue all over again. Indeed, the reader will realise that important problems are addressed and that Plato the author offers several cues in the frame of the dialogue.

6 Aporetic Ending and Fictitious Chronology

6.1 *Fictitious Chronology*

In this case I wish to argue that Plato not only creates frames which function as a comment on on what happens in a specific dialogue, but that he also wants us to understand that one dialogue should be regarded as a frame for another, and that this might be one reason why Plato sometimes connects two or more dialogues closely by their settings and the story they tell. Seen from this perspective, the dialogues narrate episodes of the life of Socrates in a fictitious chronological order as suggested by Plato himself. Yet, I suggest that this framing can also be understood as just another way by which Plato envisages promoting a better understanding of the philosophical problems raised in the dialogues. In the *Parmenides*, which in terms of the fictitious chronology is the first of the dialogues, it is the young Socrates who unsuccessfully seeks to defend the theory of Forms against Parmenides' criticism.[36] In the *Phaedo* which, dramatically speaking, is the last of the dialogues, it is the old Socrates who uses the theory of Forms to prove the immortality of the soul, that appears to be the reason why he feels happy facing the death penalty. I doubt – as Munk already did in 1857 – that Plato the author, who always weighs his words so carefully, nodded here. I rather think – as Munk did – that once again he uses

33 Cf. Diog. Laert. 2.29.
34 Cf. Allen (1970) 64.
35 Benson (1990) 19–65; Forschner (2013) 172.
36 Cf. Munk (1857); Wieland (1982) 89.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

the fictitious chronology as a dramatic cue that the theory of Forms remains valid, despite all the criticism and problems.

6.2 Euthyphro

It is indeed rewarding to take into account the fictitious chronological scheme also when one follows Plato's advice to reconsider the arguments in the *Euthyphro*. For the *Euthyphro* belongs to a series of four dialogues which, when taken together as suggested by their fictive chronology, constitute a kind of dramatic tetralogy that describes the history of the last days of Socrates. The dialogues *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito* and *Phaedo* illustrate Socrates' way from the *archon basileus* to the court case and his last days in jail. Seen in this context, Socrates' performance in the *Apology* functions as a frame that comments on the philosophical discussion of the *Euthyphro*. We remember: Euthyphro has decided to indict his own father for the murder because he thinks he knows what is pious and what is not.[37] Socrates wishes to learn from Euthyphro what, according to him, 'pious' means. Four times Euthyphro proposes a definition, four times he fails. Nevertheless, important questions are discussed; for instance, whether piety pleases the gods, and what follows from the traditional religious view that the gods sometimes quarrel and disagree amongst each other. In both cases the answers given or accepted by Euthyphro are interesting. For Euthyphro admits that 'the holy is what all the gods love',[38] which is a promising answer, but, of course, destroys the fundament of traditional polytheism.[39] And – confronted with the famous dilemma:[40] 'Are the gods pleased by what is pious because it is pious or is it pious because it pleases the gods?' – Euthyphro accepts the first option, namely that the gods are pleased by something or someone which already is pious – and rejects the alternative. This is an interesting choice, because from this follows that moral, that is pious or moral behaviour, is something which is prior to and independent of the pleasure of the gods.[41] Therefore, the gods can only appreciate and love piety or human virtue which already exists, but do not make people virtuous and pious – again a challenge to the Homeric religion and Euthyphro's expertise as a priest. Euthyphro obviously does not understand the consequences of his concessions and is not able

37 Cf. *Euthphr*. 4e.
38 Cf. *Euthphr*. 9e; translation is from Allen (1984).
39 Cf. Burnyeat (2012c) 224–237, esp. 233.
40 Cf. Helm (1981); Dorion (1997) 323–334. Over the course of philosophical history, this dilemma was discussed in reference to theological moral reasoning. On the relation to Euripides' *Hippolytus* cf. Forschner (2013) 119 f.
41 Cf. Burnyeat (2012c) 234 ff.

to defend his thesis. That is why the discussion ends in *aporia*. If one accepts that the fictitious chronology creates a frame for the *Euthyphro*, the *Apology* indeed offers a 'dramatic' clue for a better understanding of the discussion in the dialogue.

6.3 Apology

Bearing in mind Socrates' reaction to the accusation of impiety, I suggest that the *Apology* could and should be read also as a response to the problems addressed in the *Euthyphro* – especially the question as to how the moral behaviour of men is independent of what the gods want and their influence. Socrates has been charged with impiety and corruption of the young. He is accused of not believing in the gods the city believes in.[42] Of course, the accusation that Socrates does not believe in gods at all is wrong – Socrates proves this by mentioning the *daimon* and by arguing that he is a pious man. Socrates claims to serve a god (*latreia*)[43] – even though he does not give a name to that god[44] – when philosophising and trying to improve the souls of his partners. He considers himself, his way of life, his method and his ability to single out the appropriate interlocutors for philosophical discourse as a gift of a god for the benefit of the city and its citizens.[45] According to him, god has sent him to save the citizens, and most interpreters take this to mean that Socrates is pious because he does what Apollo expects of him. For they take the story about Chaerephon (who asked the god of Delphi if there were anyone wiser than Socrates) and the response he got (that no one was wiser than Socrates) as an explanation for what Socrates was doing: philosophising and testing other people in order to improve their souls. But there are problems with this interpretation.[46] Of course, Socrates was puzzled by the oracle and decided to find out whether it was true by examining others concerning that very problem. Many interpreters believe that this story is meant to explain why Socrates started his *pragma*, that is testing others, in the first place. But if so, one wonders why it ever occurred to Chaerephon to ask the Delphic oracle about Socrates at all. There would have been no reason to admire Socrates for his *pragma*, if he had not yet started with it. Obviously, Chaereplon decided to ask this particular

42 Cf. *Ap*. 24b.

43 Cf. *Ap*. 23c. This of course picks up on a definition proposed in *Euthphr.* 13d. On this and more relations between the *Euthyphro* and the *Apology* cf. Erler (1987) 164f. and Erler (2018) 21–35.

44 For the meaning of *theos* in Plato's dialogues see Bordt (2006) 55–94.

45 Cf. *Ap*. 29d-31b, 35d, 36c, 41d-e; see Erler (2002).

46 Cf. *Ap*. 21b-22e; see Heitsch (2002) 77 f.

because he admired what Socrates was already doing, namely trying to make men better by putting them to a test. Chaerephon's question therefore presupposes Socrates' *pragma*. From this follows that when Socrates is talking to people in order to find out whether there is someone who is wiser than himself, this round of interviews is caused by the oracle. But that does not mean that before this Socrates did not philosophise by testing others in order to improve their souls. Rather the conclusion must be – or so it seems to me – that Socrates' general way to philosophise and his wish to improve the souls of others was not inspired nor influenced by Apollo. Socrates' *pragma* is independent of what Apollo wants him to do,[47] from which it follows that Socrates is loved and praised by the god Apollo for something which Socrates already is doing. In doing so, Apollo confirms that Socrates' philosophical practice is pious.

Socrates claims that his philosophical task of improving people is undertaken at the bidding of a god,[48] whose name, however, is not given by him. One wonders whether this god, who inspired Socrates, can really be identified with Apollo, as many interpreters assume. For, obviously, this nameless god must always be dedicated to justice and virtue because he or she wishes that Socrates should always be dedicated to virtue and justice and improve others morally. In this respect, however, this nameless god seems to differ from the traditional Homeric gods, who might be helpful sometimes, but will also do harm to people if it pleases them. One should take it seriously when Socrates claims he believes in gods in a way none of his accusers do.[49]

All this is of great importance – it seems to me – if read in view of what is argued in the *Euthyphro*. Plato wants us to understand that Euthyphro was right when he decided that pious men are loved by the gods because they are pious, not the other way round – endorsing the first of the two alternatives: does god command what is good or pious because it is good or pious or is it good or pious because god commands it? And, by introducing the aspect of morality into the world of the gods and presenting a god who gives Socrates orientation for what he is doing, Plato also wants us to understand that Socrates believed in the gods in a different way from his contemporaries. I would even argue that here Socrates opens up a perspective which might be called henotheistic – there are many gods, but one principle which they have to follow – which was to become important in Plato's thinking and is of great importance in later Platonism. The henotheistic perspective might also help to solve the problem – also raised in the *Euthyphro* – about gods quarrelling with each other and creating problems

47 Cf. Heitsch (2002) 78 on 21b ff.
48 Cf. *Ap*. 29d-31b, 36c, 41e.
49 Cf. *Ap*. 35d; see Burnyeat (2012c) 230.

for men, as illustrated, for instance, by Euripides in the *Hippolytus*.[50] Yet for the moment, it might suffice to see what we already observed in the *Phaedo* at the beginning of the chapter: the performance of Socrates as described in the *Apology* comments on the philosophical dilemma discussed in the *Euthyphro*: ‘Are the gods pleased by what is pious because it is pious or is it pious because it pleases the gods?’. It further confirms that Euthyphro unknowingly opted for the right alternative, namely that the gods are pleased by something or someone that is already pious but is not able to give good reasons for this. Again, the dramatic action in the *Apology* helps us to understand better the philosophical discourse in the *Euthyphro*, to which the *Apology* is closely connected. The latter functions as a frame on the basis of fictitious chronology.

7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued for the importance of framing in some of Plato’s aporetic dialogues. I suggested that Plato the author sometimes frames his dialogues so as to indicate some perspectives which might contribute to a better understanding of the problems raised in the main philosophical discussion. I also proposed that Plato used literary strategies, like the fictitious chronology, to organise the dialogues in a specific way and, at the same time, to inspire a reading of the dialogues which considers both their literary and philosophical aspects. This interlinking should be taken into account when questions of a possible evolution in Plato’s thought are discussed. Of course, it is most likely that Plato developed his concepts over time and also that problems arose which could not be solved (*aporia*). But Plato also signals that the *aporia* must not be the last word, that the discussion is still open and that it might be worthwhile to read the aporetic dialogues again and again, so as to rethink the philosophical problems raised in them.[51] Plato the author, often makes suggestions to the reader by employing literary devices; there are allusions, motifs or arguments that connect different dialogues and could be understood as triggers that invite the reader to compare and read together different passages. If, however, differences occur, as they do, one should be cautious about immediately concluding that Plato the philosopher has changed his mind. Perhaps one should also take into account that Plato the author seeks to invite the reader to reconsider the problems and reflect upon the possibility that those differences

50 Cf. Erler (2018).
51 Cf. Erler (1987) 145–169.

are not differences of content, but of perspective, and that they are due to the variety of contexts created by the author as a frame for the discussions and arguments as depicted in the dialogues. That is to say, Plato the author and Plato the philosopher work hand in hand. Seen from this perspective, it becomes evident that the frames of Plato's dialogues are not just a *parergon*. They form part of the philosophical message of the dialogues. Literary strategy supports the philosophical content and adds persuasion and support to the philosophical arguments, as the *prooemia* do for the *Laws*, his last work. Maybe this is one motive that made Plato compose the dialogues the way he did despite his critique of writing. For although – as written texts – they cannot replace dialectical oral conversation, they might stimulate, support and even comment on such conversations. This is what Plato the author does when he supports Plato the philosopher in the dialogues.

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CHAPTER 6

Leisure, Philosophy and Teaching in the *Protagoras*

Maria Pavlou

1 Introduction

To begin with, beginnings are not simple. As Bennett and Royle remark, the paradox with beginnings is that they are never beginnings in the strict sense of the word, because they always have a context and are therefore determined by what comes before.[1] At the same time, 'beginnings augur, acting like promises for what is to come'.[2] Endings are no less complicated or problematic, either. On the one hand, it is not always self-evident where an ending begins. On the other, not all endings are closures: while some may indicate a closedness that leaves nothing in abeyance, others may lead to openness, and either signal a new beginning or even prompt a turning back and a new reading of the whole through an entirely different lens.[3]

The complex nature of beginnings and endings acquires special piquancy in the case of the Platonic dialogues, many of which open with everyday scenes that at first sight might seem trivial and hence more or less irrelevant to the main philosophical discussion. Whereas these introductory vignettes have often been dismissed as mere garnishes with no philosophical significance, nowadays most researchers concede that Plato's 'first words' do much more than set the scene and introduce the characters.[4] Plato's 'final words' are no less complex. Where do the dialogues leave us as readers? How do dialogues with puzzle-like endings operate? Are they aporetic or implicitly euporetic?[5] In a nutshell, how do endings, whether closed or open, (re) shape our initial understanding and 'first reading' of an epistemological discussion?

1 Bennett and Royle (1999) 3.
2 Bennett and Royle (1999) 4.
3 On endings and their semantic value see Kermode (2000); Fowler (1989); Roberts et al. (1997); Bennett and Royle (1999) 251–259. On the distinction between ending and closure see Abbott (2002) 52.
4 See among others Clay (1992); Capuccino (2014); Friedländer (1964) 230–233; Tarrant (2000) 38–41; Johnson (1998); De Sanctis (2016); Thanassas in this volume.
5 On aporetic and euporetic dialogues see Rudebusch (2002) 10–18.

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The *Protagoras*, which will concern me here, revolves around Socrates' encounter with the sophist Protagoras at Callias' mansion in Athens, and their discussion of the nature of virtue. Along with the *Euthydemus*, *Phaedo*, *Theaetetus* and *Symposium*, the *Protagoras* is one of Plato's 'double-framed' works. The actual meeting with Protagoras, which is narrated by Socrates in the first person, is framed by a longish account of the events leading up to it and an elaborate description of the atmosphere inside Callias' house.[6] All of this information, which might be defined as the dialogue's 'inner frame', is embraced by an outer frame that sets up the chronotope within which Socrates' narration unfolds. Although outer frames – which Capuccino designates 'paradoxical proems'[7] – typically differ from the main dialogues in terms of time, place, interlocutors and narrative technique, what singles out the outer frame of the *Protagoras* is: a) that Socrates features as an interlocutor within both the proem and the main discussion, a characteristic the *Protagoras* shares only with the *Euthydemus*; and b) that timewise, the embracing outer scene and the philosophical discussion take place consecutively, on the very same day. Both of these idiosyncrasies are important and conducive, as we will see, to the dialogue's better understanding.

In what follows I discuss the outer frame and part of the inner frame of the *Protagoras*, with a view to scrutinising some of the ways in which they are interwoven with the main philosophical discussion. To be sure, both the outer and inner frames have been subjected to extensive study, and much has been written on their relationship with the dialogue's epistemological part.[8] My intention is not to provide an exhaustive discussion of all possible associations, but rather to investigate in more depth one aspect that, to my knowledge, has not received adequate attention hitherto: the notion of 'leisure' (σχολή) and its role in philosophy and teaching.

6 As has been observed, the scene inside the house is rendered redolent of the Homeric *Nekyia*, thus implicitly inviting us to liken Callias' mansion to Hades and, by extension, to perceive Socrates' and Hippocrates' entry to it as a kind of *katabasis*. On this metaphor see Capra (2001) 131–135.

7 Capuccino (2014) and *ead.* in this volume. On dialogues with an extraneous frame see also Clay (1992).

8 On the association between the *Protagoras*' introductory scene and the main conversation see among others Coby (1987) 18–25; Bartlett (2016) 7–13. Contrast Taylor (1955) 238, who notes that the only purpose of the opening scene is the dating of Socrates' encounter with Protagoras by reference to the age of Alcibiades at the time.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

2 The Opening of the *Protagoras*

The *Protagoras* opens with Socrates bumping into an unnamed acquaintance, probably on the street or in another public place in Athens.[9] The friend asks Socrates about his whereabouts venturing to give his question an erotic undertone:

FRIEND: Where have you just come from, Socrates? (Πόθεν, ὦ Σώκρατες, φαίνῃ;)[10] No, don't tell me. It's pretty obvious that you've been hunting the ripe and ready Alcibiades. Well, I saw him just the other day, and he is certainly still a beautiful man – and just between the two of us, 'man' is the proper word, Socrates: his beard is already filling out.[11]

Socrates replies to his friend's indiscreet question about Alcibiades through a Homeric citation, revealing that he has just come from Callias' house, where Alcibiades was also present. As he stresses, though, it was not Alcibiades – whose presence on many occasions (θαμά, 309b) even forgot altogether – that really caught his attention, but rather the intellectual beauty of the sophist Protagoras, with whom he had a conversation.[12] On hearing of Protagoras' arrival in Athens the friend immediately puts Socrates' love life to one side, eager to learn about his encounter with such a celebrity: 'Well, sit right down, if you're free now, and tell us (ἡμῖν) all about it. Let the boy make room for you here' (310a). The use of the first-person plural pronoun ἡμῖν is a clear indication that the friend is not alone. However, it remains unclear whether he is accompanied only by an attendant – his slave, maybe – or whether ἡμῖν should be understood as referring to a wider audience present at the scene.[13] Whatever the

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9 On the significance of the friend's anonymity see Denyer (2008) 65 and the discussion below. On the significance of place in Plato in general see Hyland (1994).

10 On the semantic significance of similar phrases see Long (2014) 20–21 and Halliwell in this volume; see also Hunter (2014).

11 Translation of the *Protagoras* with slight modifications, is by Lombardo and Bell, in Cooper 1997. *Protagoras*' text is from Burnet's 1903 Oxford edition (=Burnet [1900–1907] vol. 3).

12 Notably, what Socrates says is not that he had a conversation with Protagoras, but rather that he and Protagoras said a great deal to one another: Πάνυ γε πολλὰ καὶ εἰπὼν καὶ ἀκούσας (310a). Plato's choice of words is meaningful and foreshadows the problematic nature of Socrates' and Protagoras' conversation; see Denyer (2008) on 362a3.

13 Denyer (2008) on 310a3. But see also Manuwald (1999) on 309c13, who points out that in 339e3 and 316a4 Socrates only addresses his friend.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

case, Socrates gladly accepts his friend's request, adding that he would indeed be very much obliged to them if they would listen to him (καὶ χάριν γε εἴσομαι, ἐὰν ἀκούητε, 310a). The long account that follows concludes at the point where Socrates departed from Callias' house; this is where the *Protagoras* also ends.

3 The End of the *Protagoras*

The *Protagoras* is typically classified as an aporetic dialogue, to the degree that it ends in perplexity.[14] Not only do the two main interlocutors, Socrates and Protagoras, fail to reach a consensus on the teachability of virtue, the main philosophical question they set out to examine, but they also end up shifting their respective views, a swap that Plato ingeniously focalises through the 'eyes' of the argument itself, which is depicted wagging a finger at them.[15] Socrates, on the one hand, who at first claims that virtue is not teachable, eventually comes to associate it with knowledge, thus accepting its teachability. Protagoras, on the other, concludes that virtue cannot be taught, contrary to his initial claim that it is teachable. For his part, Socrates acknowledges the dead end they have reached, and openly expresses his anxiety to settle the issue. Accordingly, he suggests to relaunch their conversation on a new basis and make a fresh beginning, first trying to formulate a definition of virtue:

SOCRATES: Now, Protagoras, seeing that we have gotten this topsy-turvy and terribly confused, I am most eager to clear it all up (καταφανῆ αὐτὰ γενέσθαι), and I would like us, having come this far (διεξελθόντας),[16] to continue until we come through (ἐξελθεῖν) to what virtue is in itself, and then to return to inquire about whether it can or cannot be taught, so that Epimetheus might not frustrate us a second time in this inquiry, as he neglected us in the distribution of powers and abilities in your story. I liked the Prometheus character in your story better than Epimetheus. Since I take promethean forethought over

14 See, e.g., Frede (1986) 735–736. The aporetic character of the *Protagoras* has been refuted by some; e.g., Politis (2012) 213: '[the discussion] far from ending in *aporia*, as the Personified Argument would have it, ends with an unambiguous and firm answer to all the questions to which it is above all addressed'; see also Long (2013) 39.

15 *Prt.* 361a-c.

16 Most read διεξελθόντας as imperfective. Contrast Politis (2012) 221–222, who takes this as a perfective and the following καί as an adverbial translating as follows: 'And I would like that, having gone through these things, we should direct our pursuit also at virtue, what it is …'.

> my life as a whole, I pay attention to these things, and if you are willing, as I said at the beginning, I would be pleased to investigate them along with you (361c-d).

Protagoras, however, does not embrace this proposal and with a compliment to Socrates' wisdom he calls a halt to the discussion:

PROTAGORAS: Socrates, I commend your enthusiasm and the way you find your way through an argument. I really don't think I am a bad man, certainly the last man to harbor ill will. Indeed, I have told many people that I admire you more than anyone I have met, certainly more than anyone in your generation. And I say that I would not be surprised if you gain among men high repute for wisdom. We will examine these things later, whenever you wish; now it is time to turn our attention elsewhere (καὶ περὶ τούτων δὲ εἰς αὖθις, ὅταν βούλῃ, διέξιμεν· νῦν δ᾽ ὥρα ἤδη καὶ ἐπ᾽ ἄλλο τι τρέπεσθαι, 361d-e).

Compared with other Platonic dialogues, which end either with Socrates' self-deprecation or with the participants' shared agreement to break off the discussion,[17] the end of the *Protagoras* is rather forced and premature. Here it is not so much the two interlocutors' failure to work out a solution to the initial question that brings the conversation to an end – on the contrary, Socrates' call for a re-examination bespeaks his conviction that there is still hope for a way forward – but rather Protagoras' unwillingness to continue owing to another commitment.[18] Taking into account Protagoras' overall stance throughout the discussion, one is tempted to speculate that his claim of another engagement is most likely an excuse.[19] Feeling trapped

17 See, e.g., *Lys.* 223b; *Hp. mi.* 376c; *Tht.* 210d.

18 A similar example is encountered in the *Euthyphro.* When at the end of the dialogue Socrates encourages Euthyphro to reconsider the issue under discussion from the very beginning (ἐξ ἀρχῆς), stressing that he is determined not to give up until they reach a solution, Euthyphro pleads another commitment: ΕΥΘ.: Εἰς αὖθις τοίνυν, ὦ Σωκράτες – νῦν γὰρ σπεύδω ποι, καί μοι ὥρα ἀπιέναι ('Some other time, Socrates. Now I am in a hurry and it is time for me to go', 15c-d). Contrast *Laches* 201b-c, where Socrates' interlocutors appear willing to continue their discussion.

19 See, e.g. *Prt.* 360d: SOC.: 'So the wisdom about what is and is not to be feared is courage and is the opposite of this ignorance? He [i.e. Protagoras] would not even nod at this; he remained silent. And I said, "What's this, Protagoras? Will you not say yes or no to my

- 978-90-04-44399-0

and humiliated at having contradicted himself on various issues, Protagoras contrives a diplomatic way to bring the discussion to an end without putting his reputation at stake or risking criticism from the assembled company for spoiling their 'spectacle'. Even though he assures Socrates that their conversation is only temporarily postponed, his refusal to set a definite time frame for the 'second round' and his deferral of responsibility for this arrangement to Socrates testify to his indifference to the continuation of their discussion.[20]

Socrates' reaction to Protagoras' stance is also striking, and somewhat paradoxical: far from taking issue with the sophist's decision (as he does, for instance, with Callicles and Thrasymachus in the *Gorgias* and the *Republic* respectively) or making fun of his hastiness (as he does with Euthyphro),[21] Socrates professes to be in haste himself, stressing that he should have left long ago and that he prolonged his stay only to please Callias (καὶ γὰρ ἐμοὶ οἷπερ ἔφην ἰέναι πάλαι ὥρα, ἀλλὰ Καλλίᾳ τῷ καλῷ χαριζόμενος παρέμεινα, 362a). Indeed, this is not the first time in the course of the dialogue that Socrates pleads another commitment, and the way he structures his assertion here clearly alludes to that other instance. When near the middle of the dialogue Protagoras stubbornly refuses to comply with Socrates' request to continue the discussion by adopting the question-answer form – that is, dialectic – Socrates abruptly breaks off the conversation, asserting that he has some 'business' which needs to be attended to:

SOCRATES: You know, Protagoras, I'm not exactly pleased myself that our session has not gone the way you think it should. But if you are ever willing to hold a discussion in such a way that I can follow, I will participate in it with you. People say of you – and you say yourself – that you are able to discuss things speaking either at length or briefly. You are a wise man, after all. But I don't have the ability to make those long speeches: I only wish I did. It was up to you, who have the ability to do both, to make this

question?" "Answer it yourself", he said (Αὐτός, ἔφη, πέρανον)'. On Protagoras' hesitation and frustration see also 335a-b and 333e: 'I could see that Protagoras was really worked up and struggling by now and that he was dead set against answering any more. Accordingly, I carefully modified the tone of my questions'.

20 Contrast *Laches* (201b-c) and *Theaetetus* (210d) where the continuation of the discussion is specifically scheduled for the next day.

21 *Grg.* 505c-506c; *Resp.* 344d-345b; *Euthphr.* 15e-16a.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

> concession, so that the discussion could have had a chance. But since you're not willing, and I'm somewhat busy (ἐμοί τις ἀσχολία ἐστί) and unable to stay for your extended speeches – there's somewhere I have to go (ἐλθεῖν γάρ ποί με δεῖ) – I'll be leaving now. Although I'm sure it would be rather nice to hear them (335b-c).

Even though Socrates gets as far as rising from his seat to depart – a detail that he highlights no fewer than three times in his narrative[22] – eventually he changes his mind and re-enters the discussion. What stands out in this episode is the reaction of Callias, the host, who tries to prevent Socrates from leaving by holding his arm and pulling at his cloak.[23] Socrates spotlights this detail with the use of the deictic pronoun τουτουΐ, which as well as adding theatricality to his narration also breaks the flow of his account.[24]

By choosing to end the dialogue at the point where Socrates departs from Callias' house, Plato leaves the outer frame open. As a result, we are not informed about the friend's and other bystanders' reaction to Socrates' narrative.[25] Nevertheless, having been reminded twice in the outer frame – by means of the temporal adverb ἄρτι ('just now')[26] – that Socrates has arrived hotfoot from Callias' house, we are prompted to bridge this gap, at least in part, by revisiting the opening exchange, this time reading it as a sequel to Socrates' meeting with Protagoras rather than as a prequel to his narration. This connection is further encouraged by the vocabulary and the unmistakable thematic links that Plato establishes between the beginning and end of the *Protagoras*, clear indications that he wanted his readers both to associate the dialogue's end with its beginning and to reread the opening scene *sub specie totius*.[27]

22 καὶ ἅμα ταῦτ᾽εἰπὼν *ἀνιστάμην* ὡς ἀπιών· καί μου *ἀνισταμένου* … (335c); ἤδη δὲ *ἀνειστήκη* ὡς ἐξιών (335d).

23 *Prt.* 335c-d. This vivid detail reminds us of the opening of the *Republic*, where a similar scene is described; whereas Socrates is in a hurry, Polemarchus' slave stops him by grabbing his cloak. Initially Socrates politely rejects Polemarchus' proposition to stay, but then he and Glaucon, who accompanies him, decide to stay, having been convinced by the attractions described to them by Polemarchus.

24 See Denyer (2008) on 335d2.

25 This is a feature of all framed dialogues except for the *Phaedo* and the *Euthydemus*.

26 *Prt.* 309b7 and 309d5.

27 Fussi (2000) 49.

3.1 *Thematic Links*

Beginning	*End*
Socrates confesses that during his meeting with Protagoras he was stunned by the sophist's wisdom, thus paying little or no attention to Alcibiades' beauty.	Socrates declares that he stayed to the conversation merely to oblige to 'beautiful' Callias.
Socrates hails Protagoras as the 'wisest' of their generation.	Protagoras' final words are a praise of Socrates' wisdom.
Emphasis is laid upon Alcibiades' advancing age.	Protagoras comments on Socrates' age.

3.2 *Lexical Links*

Beginning	*End*
Πόθεν, ὦ Σώκρατες, φαίνῃ; ἢ δῆλα δὴ ὅτι ἀπὸ κυνηγεσίου τοῦ περὶ τὴν Ἀλκιβιάδου *ὥραν*;	Νῦν δ᾽ *ὥρα* ἤδη καὶ ἐπ᾽ ἄλλο τι τρέπεσθαι … Καὶ γὰρ ἐμοὶ οἷπερ ἔφην ἰέναι πάλαι *ὥρα*.
The adjective *καλός* and the comparative form *καλλίων* occur no less than five times.	… ἀλλὰ *Καλλίᾳ τῷ καλῷ* χαριζόμενος παρέμεινα.
Πάνυ γε πολλὰ καὶ *εἰπὼν* καὶ *ἀκούσας*. … καὶ *χάριν γε εἴσομαι*, ἐὰν ἀκούητε.	Ταῦτ᾽ *εἰπόντες* καὶ *ἀκούσαντες* ἀπῇμεν. … ἀλλὰ Καλλίᾳ τῷ καλῷ *χαριζόμενος* παρέμεινα.

Several of the above associations, whether lexical or thematic, rest on contradictions. For instance, while in the opening scene Socrates extols Protagoras' intellectual beauty as superior to Alcibiades' physical looks, at the end of the dialogue that same Socrates ascribes his prolonged stay at the meeting neither to Protagoras' wisdom nor to Alcibiades' beauty, but to his host Callias, whom he provocatively tags with the adjective 'beautiful'.[28] For the purposes of this

28 The adjective 'beautiful' echoes Alcibiades' criticism on Callias at 336b-c, when the latter responds unfavourably to Socrates' request to continue their discussion using dialectic. Alcibiades accuses Callias for not speaking 'rightly' (καλῶς) and therefore for being a discredit to his name.

chapter, I will focus on the issue of time, and more precisely on how Socrates is associated with it. The notion of time is spotlighted both in the outer frame and at the end of the *Protagoras* through the emphatic use of the temporal term ὥρα.[29] In the coda, both Protagoras and Socrates employ ὥρα to express their haste and other commitments. In the outer frame, ὥρα is employed with reference to the beauty of Alcibiades which, according to Socrates' unnamed friend, has started to wither since Alcibiades is no longer an adolescent. What stands out in the friend's remark is his depiction of Socrates as on the hunt for Alcibiades and his youthful beauty. The peculiar image of Socrates running after Alcibiades' ὥρα, along with the reference to Alcibiades' advancing age, inevitably ushers in the idea of change and the ceaseless flow of time, thus evoking a feeling of urgency. This urgency, however, does not last for long; indeed, it is relieved as soon as Socrates begins to speak. By extending the temporal limits of beauty, first to maturity (through the citation of Homer, for whom those sporting a beard are the most beautiful)[30] and then to old age (through the reference to Protagoras' intellectual beauty), Socrates brings time's flow to a halt, so to speak, while the relaxed style that he adopts throughout the opening vignette recalls nothing of the hasty Socrates focalised through the eyes of his unnamed friend in the dialogue's first three lines. Socrates' reaction to his friend's request that he recount his meeting with Protagoras is telling in this respect. Not only does Socrates respond favourably to the plea, but he also sits down – a gesture indicative of his intention to provide a full account of the event – and even expresses his gratitude at having found a receptive audience to listen to him. When we read the dialogue for the first time, Socrates' stance may not surprise us. It becomes intriguing, however, if seen through the lens of the dialogue's ending, considering that the opening exchange takes place immediately after Socrates' departure from Callias' house, and bearing in mind Socrates' assertion that he is in a hurry and already quite late for his other engagement.

These radically different stances adopted by Socrates are noteworthy, and they naturally beg the question: is Socrates in a hurry, or is he not? Does he really have another commitment, or does he not? Socrates does not bother

29 The term bears several meanings, such as: season, springtime, the year generally, the fitting/right time for a thing. Metaphorically it is used to indicate 'the bloom of youth', 'youth', 'beauty' and 'grace'.

30 ΣΩ.: Εἶτα τί τοῦτο; οὐ σὺ μέντοι Ὁμήρου ἐπαινέτης εἶ, ὃς ἔφη χαριεστάτην ἥβην εἶναι τοῦ <πρῶτον> ὑπηνήτου, ἣν νῦν Ἀλκιβιάδης ἔχει; (SOC.: 'Well, what of it? I thought you were an admirer of Homer, who says that youth is most charming when the beard is first blooming – which is just the stage Alcibiades is at', 309a-b).

to specify what his other business is, merely stating that he needs to go *somewhere* (ποι). This vagueness has led some to interpret his claim as a pretence.[31] Although this is a possible and plausible hypothesis, we should not forget that in his narrative Socrates very often voices and comments on the hidden feelings that he experienced while in Callias' house.[32] On these grounds, if his real intention were merely to politely disengage himself from the gathering, we would expect him to confess this too to his listeners. According to another suggestion, Socrates' reference to another commitment is sincere, and should be identified with his meeting with the unnamed friend in the dialogue's outer frame.[33] This hypothesis is not entirely satisfactory either. First of all, the friend's remark about having seen Alcibiades recently ('Well, I saw him just the other day [πρῴην], and he is certainly still a beautiful man', 309a) implies that he and Socrates have not met for a while, which makes it more likely that Socrates has bumped into him accidentally. The friend's plea to Socrates to tell them about his encounter with Protagoras *if he is disengaged* (εἰ μή σέ τι κωλύει, 310a) also attests to this. Last but not least, considering the time lapse between Socrates' first mention of his other commitment and his actual meeting with his friend, if the meeting had indeed been pre-planned, we would expect either the friend to reproach Socrates for his delay or Socrates to apologise for being late.

Now, if Socrates is not lying, and if the meeting with his friend when he leaves Callias' house is accidental, how are we supposed to understand his 'other engagement'?

4 Leisure, Philosophy and Teaching

Before trying to provide an answer to the previous question, let me briefly digress on a notion that, in my view, might shed some light on the issue: leisure. The notion of 'leisure' (σχολή in Greek) runs throughout Plato's corpus, often in juxtaposition with the notion of 'non-leisure' (ἀσχολία).[34] While σχολή bears the general meaning of 'free time', in Plato it is often used to signify free time of a particular quality: time not spent in idleness, amusement or diversion,

31 See Fussi (2000) 49–50; Zuckert (2009) 218; Segvic (2006) 255.
32 See, e.g., *Prt.* 315d-e, 317c, 328d, 333e.
33 See Long (2014) 20–21.
34 On the notion of leisure in Plato and in antiquity in general see, among others, Stocks (1936); Pieper (1998); Anastasiades (2004); Balme (1984); Hemingway (1988); Hunnicutt (1990).

but dedicated to the pursuit of higher things. It is therefore no surprise that in Plato σχολή is advanced as a precondition for philosophical enquiry,[35] and that a number of his dialogues are explicitly presented as being conducted by interlocutors who are at leisure.[36]

The binary σχολή/ἀσχολία is explicitly thematised in the *Theaetetus*, in the celebrated juxtaposition of philosophers with litigants and orators that we come across in the Digression.[37] The philosopher, on the one hand, is emphatically portrayed as a man of leisure, who is free to follow an argument wherever it may lead, without having to worry about overburdening his interlocutors or taking precedence of any kind over them. What matters to a philosopher is merely the discovery of the truth. Litigants and orators, on the other hand, always feel constrained and oppressed by time; in the courtrooms they may speak for only as long as the water clock allows (κατεπείγει γὰρ ὕδωρ ῥέον, 172e) and are always presided over by a judge, who makes sure that they comply with the rules and execute their duties to the letter. Unlike philosophers, who are free of the constrains of time, litigants and orators are slaves to a time that constantly gives the impression of running out.[38]

Plato's Socrates features as the exemplum par excellence of the leisured philosopher. We always find him wandering around, seeking to start a new conversation and to put everything – even the slightest matter – under scrutiny, without haste and with no concern whatsoever for time.[39] Disclaiming the titles of 'wiseman' or 'teacher', Socrates converses, free of charge, everywhere and with everyone in search of the truth.[40] As Socrates himself succinctly remarks in the *Apology*, his leisure is his life's work: 'Because of this occupation, I do not have the leisure to engage in public affairs to any extent, nor indeed

35 See, e.g., *Plt.* 272b-d, where σχολή is presented as the feature that distinguishes the philosopher from the animals. As Socrates points out in the *Timaeus*, if the guardians of the ideal city are to have a philosophic nature, they need to devote themselves unceasingly to virtue keeping free from all other pursuits (ἐπιμέλειαν ἔχοντας ἀρετῆς διὰ παντός, τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιτηδευμάτων ἄγοντας σχολήν, *Ti.* 18b). On the association between σχολή and philosophy see also Capra (2001) 163–165.

36 See, e.g., *Phd.* 58d; *Phdr.* 227a-b; *Theages* 121a. See also Capra (2001) 161–165.

37 *Tht.* 172c-173b.

38 Κινδυνεύουσιν οἱ ἐν δικαστηρίοις καὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις ἐκ νέων κυλινδούμενοι πρὸς τοὺς ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ καὶ τῇ τοιᾷδε διατριβῇ τεθραμμένους ὡς οἰκέται πρὸς ἐλευθέρους τεθράφθαι (*Tht.* 172c-d).

39 As Ferrari (1987) 15 points out: 'Socrates is always free for a good talk; his "leisure" is a constant improvisatory readiness to seize the moment and create free time even where there was none before. He has the flexible timetable of the layman'; see also Zafiropoulos (2009).

40 On this issue see Pl. *Ap.* 33a-b; see also Scott (2000).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

to look after my own, but I live in great poverty because of my service to the god' (23b). Even when his life is at stake (e.g. in the *Phaedo* and the *Theaetetus*), Socrates does not experience time as a threat hanging over him, but remains calm and staunchly dedicated to his 'work'. His indifference to temporal concerns reaches its apogee in cases where he is depicted standing still – even for hours – reflecting on a matter that troubles him. The following passage from the *Symposium* is illuminating in this respect:

> One day, at dawn, he [i.e. Socrates] started thinking about some problem or other; he just stood outside, trying to figure it out. He couldn't resolve it, but he wouldn't give up. He simply stood there, glued to the same spot. By midday, many soldiers had seen him, and, quite mystified, they told everyone that Socrates had been standing there all day, thinking about something. He was still there when evening came, and after dinner some Ionians moved their bedding outside, where it was cooler and more comfortable (all this took place in the summer), but mainly in order to watch if Socrates was going to stay out there all night. And so he did; he stood on the very same spot until dawn! He only left next morning, when the sun came out, and he made his prayers to the new day (220c-d).[41]

In the *Protagoras*, the noun σχολή occurs twice, and there is also one instance of the adverb σχολῇ. Both occurrences of the noun are to be found at the point where Socrates and Hippocrates are about to enter Callias' mansion to meet Protagoras.[42] The doorkeeper, a eunuch who mistakes Socrates and Hippocrates for sophists, bars them from entering, bluntly asserting that his master Callias has no free time: "Ἔα," ἔφη, "σοφισταί τινες· οὐ σχολὴ αὐτῷ" ('Ha! More sophists! He's busy', 314d). After he slams the door in their faces, Socrates knocks again, only to receive a similar but even more brusque answer: "Ὦ ἄνθρωποι," ἔφη, "οὐκ ἀκηκόατε, ὅτι οὐ σχολὴ αὐτῷ;" ('Didn't you hear me say he's busy?', 314d).[43] The eunuch's cry is noteworthy not only because it is uttered by a slave with no personal experience of free time,[44] but also because Callias was a wealthy man who, in addition to having plenty of free time, was known as an extravagant patron of sophists.[45] It becomes even more intriguing if we consider that

41 The translation is by Nehamas and Woodruff in Cooper (1997).

42 The double occurrence of the term at this instance has received little if any attention by scholars; see, e.g., Manuwald (1999) on 314d3; Denyer (2008) 79. The only notable exception is Capra (2001) 161–165.

43 On the invocation ὦ ἄνθρωπε see Halliwell (1995) 102.

44 See Ar. *Pol.* 7.15.1334a 20–21: οὐ σχολὴ δούλοις; Capra (2001) 164–165.

45 See Pl. *Ap.* 20a; see also Xen. *Symp.* 1.5.

Socrates' and Hippocrates' discussion outside Callias' front door – on which the eunuch eavesdrops (κατήκουεν, 314c) – is anything but sophistic.[46] Bearing in mind all the above, the repeated use of the term σχολή at the point where Socrates and Hippocrates are about to enter Callias' house – the 'sophists' den', as Weiss succinctly calls it[47] – cannot be mere happenstance. Rather, it serves as a cue for both Socrates' audience and Plato's readers to pause for a moment and reflect on the relationship among σχολή, ἀσχολία and sophistry before they enter alongside Socrates and Hippocrates Callias' house of ἀσχολία.[48]

The function of the adverb σχολῇ at 330d is less straightforward but still telling. Embarking upon the issue of the unity of virtue at 329c-d, Socrates asks Protagoras whether he takes virtue to be a homogenous whole or a heterogenous whole consisting of discrete parts. Protagoras confidently argues for the latter, and Socrates, adopting the persona of an anonymous questioner, ventures to pose more particular questions on two of virtue's parts: justice and piety.[49] First he enquires about justice and then moves on to ask similar questions about piety:

> Suppose he [i.e. the anonymous interrogator] questioned us further: 'Do you also say there is a thing called piety?' We would say we do, right?
>
> Right.
>
> 'Do you say this too is a thing?' We would say we do, wouldn't we?
>
> That too.
>
> 'Do you say that this thing is by nature impious or pious?' Myself, I would be irritated with this question and would say, 'Quiet, man! How could anything else be pious if piety itself is not? (Εὐφήμει, ὦ ἄνθρωπε· σχολῇ μεντἄν τι ἄλλο ὅσιον εἴη, εἰ μὴ αὐτή γε ἡ ὁσιότης ὅσιον ἔσται).' What about you? Wouldn't you answer in the same way?
>
> Absolutely. (330d-e)

Socrates' reaction to the question posed by the unnamed questioner is notable not only owing to the negative way he employs the notion of σχολή, but also

46 Taking into account the unmistakable similarities that the *Protagoras* shares with Aristophanic comedies, especially the *Clouds* (on which see Capra [2001] 56–86; Arieti and Barrus [2010] 7–13) the eunuch's identification of Socrates and Hippocrates to sophists could also be seen as an allusion to Aristophanes' portrait of Socrates as a sophist in the *Clouds*.

47 Weiss (1985) 334.

48 Capra (2001) 164 remarks that the 'porta chiusa' of Callias' house seems to materialise, as it were, the opposition between *logos* filosofico and *logos* retorico.

49 *Prt.* 329d-330d.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

because his pretended indignation, expressed through the imperative εὐφήμει, and the rather brusque invocation ὦ ἄνθρωπε both echo the eunuch's response at 314d, where, as we have seen, the notion of σχολή is put under the limelight.[50] Even though this similarity might be coincidental, I am more inclined to think that Plato wanted his audience to be reminded of the eunuch episode here and, therefore, to see in Socrates' exasperated claim that it would be too difficult (literally, that it would take too much time) to prove that piety itself is not pious a touch of irony. To better appreciate the use of σχολῇ here, it is important to remember that the above exchange takes place immediately after Protagoras' Great Speech and after Socrates' request to the sophist to set aside the long speeches and start answering his questions succinctly, using the method of *brachylogia*. Although Protagoras complies with this request, his subsequent responses to Socrates' terse and hair-splitting questions are given in haste, without much consideration, as if *brachylogia* were synonymous to hastiness.[51] As a result, many significant issues remain unsettled, while others are not even touched upon. It is because of these remaining ambiguities that at 330e, immediately after Socrates' supposed indignation, the unnamed questioner accuses the two interlocutors of inconsistency, a fault that Socrates ascribes exclusively to Protagoras, who was providing the answers.

Protagoras is a professional who commodifies his knowledge and gets paid for his services.[52] This means that for him time is also a commodity; it has value and translates into money. This is eloquently articulated at 318a, where in enumerating the benefits a student might gain from his lectures, Protagoras couches them in temporal terms, taking the 'day' as his measure: 'Young man, this is what you will get if you study with me: The very day (ἡμέρᾳ) you start, you will go home a better man, and the same thing will happen the day after. Every day, day after day (ἑκάστης ἡμέρας), you will get better and better'. If Protagoras agrees to enter a discussion with Socrates, his motivation for doing so is not a genuine interest in examining the teachability of virtue and other corollary issues, but primarily, as Socrates specifically observes, his desire to show off and give a virtuoso performance of his skills to the other sophists present.[53]

50 The same applies to the use of μεντἄν, which like ἔα in 314d indicates lively surprise; see Manuwald (1999) on 314d3 and 330d8.

51 As Bartlett (2016) 45 observes, 'Protagoras agrees with the more acceptable or respectable alternatives put before him at every stage'. See also Beversluis (2000) 264–266.

52 That the sophists were paid for their services is mentioned no less than 19 times in the inner frame. In 349a Socrates also emphasises that Protagoras was the first to receive such a fee for his services.

53 See *Prt.* 317c: 'It looked to me that he wanted to show off in front of Prodicus and Hippias, and to bask in glory because we had come as his admirers'.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

At the same time, Protagoras seeks to persuade the young Hippocrates, and to attract the other potential customers who have flocked to Callias' house, to study with him and pay him for his services.[54] That being the case, for Protagoras the conversation with Socrates is first and foremost 'business' (ἀσχολία), and as such it takes the form of a 'battle of wits' (ἀγὼν λόγων).[55] The sooner he outmatches Socrates and proves his superiority, the brighter his victory and the more grandiose his reputation.

Socrates cuts a different figure. Although initially he is indifferent to Protagoras' sojourn in Athens and meets him merely for Hippocrates' sake, his feelings subsequently change, as is testified at 328d-e where he expresses his gratitude to Hippocrates for having urged him to go to Callias' house. Protagoras is a well-educated man, with his own outlook, firm theses and beliefs.[56] As such, Socrates deems him a 'touchstone' whose opposition and dissent might be useful for testing and confirming his own moral theory and suppositions. This is something that Socrates openly acknowledges several times throughout the discussion.[57]

Whereas a promising interlocutor, Protagoras' haste and competitive spirit – further inflamed by the assembled company, whose applause and cheers turn the discussion into a spectacle[58] – compromise Socrates' typically unhurried and leisured approach, evoking in him a feeling of urgency. At 335e-336b Socrates compares himself to a slow runner incapable of catching up with Protagoras, whom he likens to long-distance or day-course racers in general, and to Criso, a famous runner from Himera, in particular. At 339d-e he likens Protagoras' exegesis of Simonides' ode to a bunch on his face that forced him to solicit Prodicus' assistance, so as to afford himself some extra time to think:

SOCRATES: Protagoras got a noisy round of applause for this speech. At first I felt as if I had been hit by a good boxer. Everything went black and I was reeling from Protagoras' oratory and the others' clamor. Then, to tell you the truth, to stall for time to consider what

54 Collins (2015) 145–182.

55 This is explicitly confessed by Protagoras himself when Socrates requests that he provides shorter answers: 'Socrates, I have had verbal contests with many people, and if I were to accede to your request and do as my opponent demanded, I would not be thought superior to anyone, nor would Protagoras be a name to be reckoned with among the Greeks' (335a).

56 On why Protagoras is deemed as a potentially good conversational partner see Long (2013) 42–45; Irwin (1995) 92–94.

57 See *Prt.* 348c-d, 360e-361a.

58 See, e.g., *Prt.* 334c, 339d-e.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

the poet meant (ἵνα μοι χρόνος ἐγγένηται τῇ σκέψει), I turned to Prodicus and, calling on him, 'Prodicus', I said, 'Simonides was from your hometown, wasn't he?'

The hastiness of the enquiry also comes eloquently to the fore at the end of the dialogue, where Socrates refers to the ongoing conversation by employing the verb σπεύδω ('to rush') three times:

SOCRATES: It seems to me that our discussion has turned on us, and if it had a voice of its own, it would say, mockingly, 'Socrates and Protagoras, how ridiculous you are, both of you. Socrates, you said earlier that virtue cannot be taught, but now you are urging (σπεύδεις) to argue the very opposite and have attempted to show that everything is knowledge—justice, temperance, courage—in which case, virtue would appear to be eminently teachable. On the other hand, if virtue is anything other than knowledge, as Protagoras has been trying to say, then it would clearly be unteachable. But, if it turns out to be wholly knowledge, as you now urge (σπεύδεις), Socrates, it would be very surprising indeed if virtue could not be taught. Now, Protagoras maintained at first that it could be taught, but now he thinks the opposite, urging (σπεύδοντι) that hardly any of the virtues turn out to be knowledge. On that view, virtue could hardly be taught at all' (361a-c).

Bearing in mind all the above, let us reconsider Socrates' 'other engagement'. I suggest that Socrates is not lying, and that he truly has another engagement. This engagement, however, is not a typical engagement, that is, a pre-planned activity or meeting scheduled for a particular time and place; rather, it is an engagement pertaining to Socrates' leisure. In spite of his ample 'free time', Socrates is constantly engaged, because his whole life is dedicated to the search for the truth; any activity that hinders him from properly performing his 'work' is avoided and put aside. Accordingly, for as long as his discussion with Protagoras appears to be leading somewhere, Socrates feels that he is remaining faithful to his 'work'. When this condition is violated and the discussion takes on a predominantly agonistic character, he feels that it is high time to continue his 'work' elsewhere. This suggestion gains support if we consider the reasons that make Socrates prolong his stay at Callias' house, in spite of his expressed intention to leave the meeting midway through. Although in the very last line of his account Socrates claims that he stayed at the meeting to please Callias,

- 978-90-04-44399-0

a careful reading of the 'crisis scene', where he rises to depart, makes it clear that his change of mind should rather be associated with the new prospect of a more fruitful discussion and the fact that his request has been heard.[59] Indeed, Socrates seems to hold this view until the end of the discussion, if we are to judge from his exhortation to Protagoras at 361c-d to make a fresh beginning by setting their discussion on a different basis.

Consequently, when Socrates finally departs from Callias' house, he goes out seeking his next 'work'. The accidental encounter with his friend, and the latter's eagerness to hear about his meeting with Protagoras, presents itself as a suitable occasion (*kairos*) for Socrates to make use of his leisure. I would argue that this occurs for two main reasons:

a) A leading character near the end of the main philosophical discussion (352d-357e) is an imaginary composite called 'the many' (οἱ πολλοί), to whom Socrates addresses a number of questions. Even though Socrates often dialogises his thoughts by introducing imaginary and impersonal figures that criticise or question him,[60] the shared character of this fictitious 'many' is anomalous and unique.[61] Among the various interpretations that have been suggested,[62] I find particularly attractive Ebert's association of this 'fabricated group' ('the many') with the unnamed friend in the framing scene. As Ebert suggests, the friend's anonymity (and I would add, the anonymity of all the bystanders implied by the personal pronoun ἡμῖν at 310a) 'makes him a perfect representative of the πολλοί'.[63] This association gains in significance if we consider the stance that Socrates adopts towards the 'many' during his discussion with Protagoras. In contrast to the sophist, who repeatedly expresses his disdain and contempt for 'the many' (352e, 353a; see also 317a), Socrates contends that, despite their flawed beliefs, 'the many' might actually be persuaded and taught about their misconceptions. As he exhorts Protagoras at 353a: 'Come with me, then, and let's try to persuade (πείθειν) people and to teach (διδάσκειν) them what is this experience which they call being overcome by pleasure, because of which they fail to do the best thing when they know what it is'.

On account of the above, even though Socrates has never been a 'teacher' in the strict sense of the word,[64] it would not be far-fetched to suggest that he perceives his encounter with his friend as an opportune 'teachable moment'.

59 See Manuwald (1999) on 362a2. As Manuwald puts it 'Wenn Sokrates zuletzt tatsächlich bleibt, dann, weil er sich durchgesetzt hat …, und nicht einfach Kallias zu Gefallen'.

60 See, e.g., *Prt.* 330c and 330d; see also Long (2013).

61 See Woolf (2002) 229–233.

62 For two different approaches, see Irwin (1995) and Woolf (2002).

63 Ebert (2003) 7; see also Denyer (2008) 65.

64 See, e.g., *Ap.* 33a.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

To be sure, the unnamed friend's tactless and indiscreet questions about Socrates' reputed love for Alcibiades, in conjunction with his ignorance of Protagoras' arrival in Athens a couple days ago, bespeaks a person that is easy-going and prefers gossip to philosophy. Nevertheless, by confessing to him the 'strange' (ἄτοπον, 309b) thing that happened at Callias' house, Socrates cleverly stimulates his friend's interest and piques his curiosity, so that he becomes a receptive and attentive listener to a narrative that proves to be of immediate concern to him, albeit neither comfortable nor easy.

An objection to this proposition could be that Socrates' account cannot have an educational character because it goes mostly uninterrupted, with no interventions by his audience and no use of dialectic. A response to this objection would be that – in addition to the fact that Socrates' narrative represents a conversation, and as such it radically differs from Protagoras' long and 'monological' expositions[65] – Socrates does not merely quote verbatim what was said at Callias' house, but provides an extended account, interspersed with a plethora of remarks on extralinguistic cues, and on his interlocutors' and his own intentions and feelings.[66] By means of these interpolations Socrates manages to retain his audience's interest while adding vividness to his account. At the same time, though, his comments and remarks inevitably expand the time of the account, thus slowing down the narrative tempo and allowing time for his listeners to pause and reflect on the issues in question.

b) Socrates' eagerness to narrate his long, freshly concluded discussion with Protagoras immediately after its completion should also be associated with Socrates himself. Given that the conversation with Protagoras remains without closure, by revisiting the whole discussion all over again, Socrates can rethink several issues that have remained open, this time at leisure and without pressure. It is through this lens, I would argue, that we should understand the gratitude he expresses to his friend at the opening of the dialogue (310a) for his willingness to listen.

5 Inner Frame

As noted above, the greater part of the inner frame of the *Protagoras* concentrates on the event that prompted Socrates to meet up with Protagoras; the

65 On this issue see Cotton (2014) 44–49. See also Burnyeat (2013) 419, who points out that the *Protagoras* 'is Plato's most sustained treatment of the comparative merits of the many different forms of διαλέγεσθαι'.

66 On this see also Strauss (1964) 58.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

unexpected and untimely visit of his friend Hippocrates, a young aristocrat who envisages entering politics and becoming ‘renowned in the city’ (316b-c). Convinced that Protagoras is the person most apt to help him to achieve his goals Hippocrates, hesitant to meet the sophist because of his young age, comes to Socrates to beg for his intervention. One of the things that captures our attention in Socrates’ narrative on this incident is the plethora of terms that indicate time, and the accumulation of verbs and adverbs that serve to gloss Hippocrates’ impatience and haste. Hippocrates arrives to Socrates’ house very early in the morning (ἔτι βαθέος ὄρθρου, 310a) and, feeling no compunction about calling at such an inappropriate time, he anxiously bangs on the door (τὴν θύραν … πάνυ σφόδρα ἔκρουε, 310b) with his stick. When the door is opened for him, he barges right in (εὐθὺς εἴσω ᾔει ἐπειγόμενος, 310b) yelling at Socrates whether he is awake or asleep. Hippocrates, we learn, has been absent from Athens, running after an escaped slave of his, and was informed of Protagoras’ visit to the city the very last evening (ἑσπέρας, 310c), after he had got in very late (ὀψέ, 310c) from Oenoë. Hippocrates confesses to Socrates that he intended to rush to his house at once (ἐνεχείρησα εὐθὺς παρὰ σὲ ἰέναι, 310c), but then decided that it was too late at night (ἔπειτά μοι λίαν πόρρω ἔδοξε τῶν νυκτῶν εἶναι, 310c-d). After having just a few hours of sleep, however, he made his way straight to Socrates (εὐθὺς ἀναστὰς οὕτω δεῦρο ἐπορευόμην, 310d). Hippocrates’ haste and impatience is also evident in his repeated exhortations to Socrates to set off to see Protagoras immediately (ἀλλὰ τί οὐ βαδίζομεν παρ’ αὐτόν, ἵνα ἔνδον καταλάβωμεν; … ἀλλ’ ἴωμεν, 310e-311a), and in his various invocations to the gods, which bespeak his excitement and restlessness.[67]

In his attempt to quell Hippocrates’ anxiety, Socrates cautions him about the inappropriateness of the hour[68] and suggests that they go outside in his yard and wait until the sun comes up. He also reassures Hippocrates that it is unlikely to miss Protagoras, for the sophist typically spends his time indoors: Μήπω, ἀγαθέ, ἐκεῖσε ἴωμεν – πρῲ γάρ ἐστιν – ἀλλὰ δεῦρο ἐξαναστῶμεν εἰς τὴν αὐλήν, καὶ περιιόντες αὐτοῦ διατρίψωμεν, ἕως ἂν φῶς γένηται. Εἶτα ἴωμεν (311a). While strolling in the yard waiting for the sun to come up, Socrates prompts Hippocrates to think about and reflect on the implications of his prospective studies with Protagoras. By putting his young acquaintance to the test, Socrates helps him to comprehend that a sophistic education might be a danger to his soul, and thus to recognise his reckless desire and ignorance.

67 Νὴ τοὺς θεούς (310b-c and 310d); ὦ Ζεῦ καὶ θεοί (310e).

68 Denyer (2008) on 311a3 notes that Socrates’ caution on the inappropriateness of the hour may also be an implicit allusion to the fact that Hippocrates is not yet intellectually mature for such a meeting.

Although much has been written about Socrates' and Hippocrates' conversation and its bearing upon the main philosophical discussion,[69] its particularly relaxed style has not received adequate attention. This feature finds a masterful expression in the verb περιῇμεν, which Socrates chooses to describe their stroll; both the imperfect tense and the preposition περί ('around') serve to signify a cyclical and repetitive movement, which sharply contrasts with Hippocrates' previous linear and unceasing motion (running after a slave, rushing to Socrates' house and seeking to head immediately for Callias' mansion). Indeed, by asking Hippocrates to pause for a while and wait until dawn Socrates creates 'free time' for him, that is time devoid of ἀσχολία. Seen from this perspective, what Socrates does is to qualify Hippocrates' waiting time as leisure, that is time spent for a higher purpose. Consequently, far from showing any indignation for having been awaken so early in the morning, Socrates ingeniously manages to transform the socially inappropriate time that Hippocrates bursts into his house into a qualitatively proper time, a *kairos* that is.[70]

Socrates does not specify how long he and Hippocrates spent walking in the courtyard, but by the time they arrive at Callias' house, Protagoras is already 'in action' and the mansion is thronged with aspiring young politicians. It can therefore be surmised that, even though the initial plan was to wait until sunrise, their departure from Socrates' house was substantially delayed. Notably, when day breaks and the first rays of the sun appear, not only is their conversation not interrupted, but it also reaches a climax: this is the critical moment when Hippocrates, interrogated by Socrates about what he hopes to gain from studying with Protagoras, becomes aware of his own ignorance: 'And if somebody asks you what you expect to become in going to Protagoras?' He blushed in response – there was just enough daylight now to show him up – and said, 'If this is at all like the previous cases, then, obviously, to become a sophist' (311e-312a). When citing this passage most commentators focus on Hippocrates' physical and emotional condition, drawing associations between the daylight and his enlightenment.[71] I would suggest that the passage can also be read in terms of σχολή: although daybreak has been set as the prospective limit of Hippocrates' waiting, this temporal moment proves inappropriate for

69 See, e.g., Coby (1987) 25–32; Bartlett (2016) 13–17.

70 The ease with which Hippocrates enters Socrates' house in spite of the inappropriateness of the time comes to sharp contrast with the eunuch's refusal to let Socrates and Hippocrates into Callias' house. On the notion of *kairos* in the *Protagoras*, especially in Protagoras' Great Speech see Andrews (2017).

71 See Denyer (2008) on 311a3; Fussi (2000) 45. See also Demetr. *Eloc*. 218 where this particular passage is cited as a model of how a circumstantial detail may add vividness to a narrative.

the interruption of their discussion, and it is therefore simply ignored. Hence the strolling of the two interlocutors in the courtyard continues until Socrates feels that his conversation with Hippocrates has settled all the issues that needed to be settled and has therefore reached a *telos*.

Strikingly, the leisurely mode of conversation adopted by Socrates and Hippocrates in the former's courtyard continues even when they reach Callias' house. Instead of entering at once – as one would probably expect them to do in light of Hippocrates' previous zeal to meet Protagoras – they linger outside the front door, discussing an issue that has cropped up en route:

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ: ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἐν τῷ προθύρῳ ἐγενόμεθα, ἐπιστάντες περί τινος λόγου διελεγόμεθα, ὃς ἡμῖν κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν ἐνέπεσεν· ἵν᾽ οὖν μὴ ἀτελὴς γένοιτο, ἀλλὰ διαπερανάμενοι οὕτως ἐσίοιμεν, στάντες ἐν τῷ προθύρῳ διελεγόμεθα ἕως συνωμολογήσαμεν ἀλλήλοις (314c).

SOCRATES: When we got to the doorway we stood there discussing some point which had come up along the road and which we didn't want to leave unsettled before we went in. So we were standing there in the doorway discussing it until we reached an agreement.[72]

This passage is notable not least for its use of the adjective ἀτελής. Socrates and Hippocrates appear unwilling to end their conversation before they reach some kind of agreement, so that their discussion will not be left without a *telos*.[73] The need for closure is also signified through the participle διαπερανάμενοι, διαπεραίνω meaning 'to bring to a conclusion'. Although Socrates does not bother to indicate the length of their discussion, the imperfect tense of διαλέγομαι,[74] the conjunction ἕως that introduces the temporal clause, and the technique of repetition (ἐν τῷ προθύρῳ – ἐν τῷ προθύρῳ, ἐπιστάντες – στάντες, διελεγόμεθα – διελεγόμεθα, ἵνα μὴ ἀτελὴς γένοιτο – ἕως συνωμολογήσαμεν ἀλλήλοις) all imply the lapse of a substantial period of time.[75] Socrates does not bother

72 The scene reminds us of the beginning of the *Symposium* (174d-175b), where Socrates is presented lingering at Agathon's doorway lost in his thoughts, while Agathon and his guests are about to start dining. When Agathon requests that they bring Socrates in, Aristodemus intervenes declaring that it is Socrates' habit (ἔθος) to get lost in his thoughts.

73 On the notion of *telos* see also *Prt.* 347c and 348a.

74 Burnyeat (2013), esp. 422.

75 Capra (2001) 165. As Burnyeat (2013) 422 notes: 'By the time they arrive in the doorway to Callias' house, Hippocrates is no longer in a rush. He is a model of calm who shares Socrates' desire to reach agreement on whatever it was they were discussing along the way'.

to disclose the nature of the issues that he and Hippocrates wrestled with outside Callias' house either. What matters is not the *what* but the *how* of their discussion, that is, the leisured mode of their exchange. The two interlocutors adopt a similar stance even inside Callias' house, since before meeting Protagoras they spend some time looking around, examining everything: Ἡμεῖς οὖν ὡς εἰσήλθομεν, ἔτι σμίκρ᾽ ἄττα διατρίψαντες καὶ ταῦτα διαθεασάμενοι προσῇμεν πρὸς τὸν Πρωταγόραν ('So when we were inside and had spent a little more time examining everything, we went up to Protagoras', 316a).[76]

6 Concluding Remarks

As I have tried to demonstrate, the binary σχολή/ἀσχολία, although not thematised in the *Protagoras*, runs through it as an undercurrent, finding its manifestations in the figures of Socrates and Protagoras, the dialogue's two leading characters. On the one hand, Protagoras is an example of a man in ἀσχολία; he is a professional who typically conducts his teaching indoors, addresses a high-profile clientele,[77] and always receives a salary for his services. Accordingly, for Protagoras time has a pressing effect, for it is a commodity always redeemed with money and fame. If the time that he decides to dedicate to his discussion with Socrates runs out before they reach a *telos*, that is because he realises that such a discussion is detrimental to his reputation and non-profitable in any sense. Socrates, on the other hand, is the exemplum par excellence of σχολή. The very fact that he eagerly offers a group of laymen in the street a full account of the long discussion he has just had with Protagoras, presents a lucid example of his leisured way of life. While his conversation with Protagoras turns into both an ἀγὼν λόγων and a spectacle, thus placing some disconcerting pressure

76 I substitute 'examining everything' for Lombardo and Bell's 'looking at everything', as the verb διαθεῶμαι bears the meaning 'look into something' and not merely 'look at something'. Socrates' choice of verb implies that he and Hippocrates did not spend time merely looking around but that they also had a discussion on what they were faced with. Viewed from this perspective, the time lapse between their entrance into Callias' house and their meeting with Protagoras might have been longer than indicated with the locution σμίκρ᾽ ἄττα. Socrates often uses σμικρός in an ironic way; see e.g. *Symposium* 199b, *Philebus* 20c, where the adjective is used with reference to large and important issues. In *Protagoras* 328e, Socrates' small (σμικρόν τι) clarifying question to Protagoras shifts the focus of the conversation from the teachability of virtue to virtue's uniformity. On this see also Denyer (2008) on 316a6.

77 See, for instance, the list of names provided in 314e-315b, all of whom are the offspring of the most prosperous and prominent families.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

upon him, his conversation with Hippocrates constitutes an example of a philosophical discussion conducted at leisure – a yardstick against which the conversation with Protagoras can be measured. Socrates' account of his meeting with Protagoras is also orchestrated in a leisurely style, in the sense that he often interrupts the flow of his own narrative, thus allowing his audience valuable time to think on the various issues under question.

Consequently, far from being simply informative or decorative, both the outer and inner frames of the *Protagoras* provoke reflection and are essential to a better understanding, if not of the philosophical subject of virtue, then of the importance of 'slowness' in philosophy.[78] Philosophy cannot and should not be conducted in haste, not even when the issues at stake appear trivial or self-evident. The same rationale should also permeate the reading of philosophy. The numerous comments and remarks that intersperse Socrates' account provide 'breathing spaces', not only for the dialogue's internal audience but also for us readers: we do not passively consume whatever is offered to us, captivated like Protagoras' followers by what we read; instead we make pauses – even stops – in order to reflect not only on the views entertained by the dialogue's interlocutors, but also on *how* those views were birthed in the first place. Especially nowadays, when the motto 'time is money' predominates, Plato's incitement to σχολή is timelier than ever.

78 On the 'slowness' of philosophy see Sen (2000).

CHAPTER 7

Justice as Happiness

Republic and Its Proems

Panagiotis Thanassas

1 Proems as Parts: On the Method

In his 1997 paper, 'First Words', one of the most important studies ever written about the opening of Plato's *Republic*, M.F. Burnyeat begins his analysis with the general observation that:

> today the Straussians, so far as I can see, are the only group to have a considered, general view on the significance of Plato's preludes. They have a legitimate case when they complain, as they regularly do, that everyone else proceeds as if they would prefer Plato to have written treatises instead of dialogues.[1]

Twenty years later, I am not sure if we can state with certainty who exactly the Straussians are. But we can agree with Burnyeat's connection between the preludes and the issue of Plato's dialogic form; we can take heart in the fact that neither topic is now as neglected as it once was; and we can look forward to the contribution that the present volume will make in once again revitalising interest in the topic of Platonic proems.

Burnyeat's overall approach in that paper (some key positions of which will be critically evaluated below)[2] is in keeping with the general trend in Platonic studies of the past decades, in that it emphasises the need for a parallel, congruent examination of the dramatic 'form' and philosophical 'content' of

1 Burnyeat (1997) 307–308. This essay was written mainly during a research stay at the University of Münster, which was generously supported by the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation. I would like to thank my host in Münster, Prof. Walter Mesch, the three editors of the present volume, Prof. Martin Vöhler, Dr. Peter Larsen (who also helped in smoothing out the prose of the present text), and my PhD students Ioannis Alysandratos and Evangelia Theodoroudi, for their helpful comments and suggestions. The final version was completed at the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies (Princeton University), thanks to a generous Fellowship awarded to me in Summer 2019; during this final stage, I could also profit from the feedback I received after a presentation at Stanford University (organised by Prof. C. Bobonich).

2 See Section 3.

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the Platonic dialogues.[3] In contrast, however, with the basic motivation behind this trend, which attempts to dispel the impression that the form of a Platonic dialogue functions as something distinct from its philosophical content, Burnyeat's approach seems to reinstate that traditional separation. He treats the preludes as an aspect of dramatic form, in order to contrast them with the 'substantive philosophical content' that follows.[4] The co-examination of form and content, as attempted by Burnyeat, is thus based upon a clear hierarchy: the quasi genuine philosophical content, which will progressively be revealed through the course of a dialogue, delineates and explains the meaning, character and content of all those elements (including the proems) which are to be treated just as 'dramatic and literary detail'.[5] The preludes can, therefore, be understood only on the basis of some clues provided in the course of the dialogue that follows, i.e. in what Burnyeat regards as the 'real' philosophy, and to which the preludes obviously do not belong.

Th. Ebert represents an interpretive approach that stands in direct opposition to the one articulated by Burnyeat. In a text dealing with the dramaturgy, persons and scenery of the *Republic*, Ebert (2002) argues that no single aspect or feature of the original scene of the text could (or should) be explained by reference to a later passage. In contrast to Burnyeat (whose name does not appear in Ebert's text), but also to many other scholars, Ebert maintains that the very first word of the text, the verb κατέβην, cannot be regarded as an allusion to the κατάβασις encountered in the Allegory of the Cave, since the reader, upon first encountering the text of the *Republic*, cannot be expected to know what will follow.[6] Ebert rejects altogether the expectation that 'a detail of the introductory scene might be understood as an allusion to something of which the reader will become aware only in the course of the further reading of the dialogue'.[7] The intertextual associations of specific passages with other Platonic dialogues are also completely rejected as versions of 'a typical *interpretatio philologica*', which invokes or requires knowledge of other Platonic dialogues

3 Although the need for this co-examination was first emphasised by Schleiermacher (2013, 38: 'form and content are inseparable'), its contemporary appeal does not necessarily signal a general return to Schleiermacher's approach. Thus, for example, the mutual clarification of form and content is also central to the approach of those who, in strong opposition to Schleiermacher, place the 'unwritten doctrines' at the heart of their enquiry; see, among many others, Szlezák (1985) and Krämer (1990).

4 Burnyeat (1997) 313; cf. (1997) 322: 'the words to follow […], through which the philosophy is presented'.

5 Burnyeat (1997) 323–324.

6 Ebert (2002) 62.

7 Ebert (2002) 64.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

as a prerequisite for understanding a specific passage in the *Republic*.[8] In Ebert's eyes, Plato had in mind only readers who rely exclusively on the knowledge obtained within the course of the dialogue and its evolution.[9] His own interpretation will eventually end in a dull biographicism, according to which all details of the original scene are pieces of a broader Platonic attempt to preserve the memory of Socrates, but also to protect himself from the outrage his text would cause in certain groups within the Athenian democracy.[10]

We, thus, face two extreme, equally one-sided, and probably weak, interpretative approaches. Burnyeat diminishes the philosophical significance of the preludes by assigning them a symbolic function, which can only be decoded retrospectively, once one has worked through the philosophy in the rest of the dialogue. This symbolic function was, of course, the basic trait of the Neoplatonic reading, and it is no coincidence that Burnyeat expounds his interpretation by taking his starting point from, and making substantial reference to, Proclus. Ebert, on the other hand, presents (or presupposes) the Platonic reader as a professional hypocrite who should remain naïve and 'innocent', unaffected by the 'philological' burden of studying Platonic philosophy. Ebert's ideal hermeneutic experience is the first (or even the only) encounter with a dialogue; the ideal reader who comes across the initial κατέβην cannot possibly have any knowledge of the dialogue as a whole. In fact, Ebert expects this reader to renounce the very nature of dialogues as written texts, to which the reader, by definition, can and should always return. The interpretative instructions offered by Ebert, thus, pertain exclusively to the first reading, and they ultimately destroy the very character of the dialogues as written texts, and as grounds for the repeatability of the reading experience. The one-time-listener, or a philosophically inexperienced and uneducated reader, is portrayed here as the ideal recipient of Platonic philosophy.

These interpretive strategies represent two diametrically opposed misconceptions of the hermeneutic relationship between parts and whole. Burnyeat eventually reinstates a dogmatic separation of form and content, when he presents the proems as secondary pieces that do not belong to the overall philosophical totality of the dialogue; he eliminates their specific claim to be meaningful components, until they are deciphered through the main

8 Ebert (2002) 67.

9 Cf. Ebert (2002) 63: 'Es scheint aber doch mehr als fraglich, ob Platon seinen Dialog für den interpretierenden Philologen und nicht für den Leser geschrieben hat, der erst im Lesen des Dialoges ein Wissen gewinnt, das ihm zu einem fortschreitenden Verständnis des Werkes verhilft'.

10 Ebert (2002) 68–71.

('philosophical') part of the dialogue, which will finally reveal to us the real function of that preliminary part. Ebert, for his part, in his equally dogmatic pursuit of the methodological priority of a naïve reader, treats the proems as fully autonomous units, which can be understood only by themselves, or through extra-textual biographical allusions, without permitting the enrichment of their meaning entailed in the return from the totality to the initial part. The hermeneutic totality, thus, gets fragmented into a paratactic appearance of individual moments.

These two extremes demonstrate the necessity of the first of the two basic methodological prerequisites which, in my view, ground the proper approach to the prelude not only of the *Republic* but of any Platonic dialogue. The relationship between a dialogue and its proem is *a relationship between whole and part* – and this trivial postulation carries crucial methodological implications. I will not speak here of a *dialectical* relationship between whole and parts;[11] I will instead confine myself to elaborating an insight which was articulated two centuries ago in the field of hermeneutics, and which, in the meantime, should have become indisputable: I mean the famous 'hermeneutic circle', which each interpreter is expected to traverse, and which spans the whole and the parts of a text.[12] Successfully traversing this circle enriches the understanding of both the parts and the whole. This interdependence between the prelude and the dialogical totality is intensified by the fact that the *Republic* is a narrated dialogue, in which Socrates is the arbiter of what is included in the narration, and this selection apparently conforms to an overall plan that will be deployed throughout the text. Even if a reader (in the mould of Ebert's ideal reader) has no knowledge of how the dialogue progresses, she must take into account that the Platonic Socrates as a narrator does have this knowledge;

11 The term 'dialectic' has unfortunately been seriously damaged by its repeated exploitation. Emphasising the original significance of the concept, as it emerges both within the Platonic and the Hegelian framework, we could note that a 'dialectical' understanding of a concept does not consider its content as a given *fait accompli*, but allows it to emerge through the progress of the mutual relations between a multitude of concepts, which are thus mutually determined. In view of our present topic, this means that we cannot talk about the prelude of the *Republic* without considering the text as a whole. Furthermore, what we say about the prelude has an impact on our understanding of the whole dialogue, just as the latter influences our understanding of the part that is the prelude.

12 Influenced by the philologists A. Boeckh and F. Ast, F. Schleiermacher insisted on the importance of the 'hermeneutic fundamental principle' that 'just as the whole is understood out of the individual, so too, the individual can only be understood out of the whole'; see Schleiermacher (1829) 329. In the 20th century then, the 'hermeneutic circle' sees various transformations in Heidegger's ontology or in Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

already at the beginning of the dialogue he has a complete overview of everything that has taken place, and he constructs his narration on the basis of this inclusive overview.[13]

I would like now to articulate a second methodological principle, which concerns the character of Platonic dialogues as written texts. Each Platonic dialogue is a mimetic representation of an oral conversation and retains, in terms of its dramatic development, all of the salient features of orality. This conversation is however presented as contained within a written text, which, by its very nature, aspires to mediate between an author and a reader. It seems, therefore, that the meaning of a Platonic dialogue unfolds on two levels: Within the dialogue, meaning is generated in the context of a conversation between the main speaker (e.g. Socrates) and his interlocutors (who in many dialogues, including the *Republic*, change). This field of dramatic orality, however, is inscribed within another wider field, upon which the former depends: that is the field of literacy, on which the author of the dialogue (Plato) addresses his reader. The philosophical content of a dialogue can therefore only be reconstructed if we take into account a *quartet of moments*: not only Socrates and his respective interlocutor, but also the author Plato and the reader whom he addresses. In other words, as I have suggested elsewhere,[14] with respect to a Platonic dialogue the question 'what does Socrates maintain here?' is never sufficient, unless it is accompanied by a second, broader and more fundamental question: 'what does Plato expect his reader to understand, when he presents Socrates as maintaining what he maintains?'.

I shall mention, finally, a third methodological principle, which is specifically linked to the preludes and has indeed been emphasised by Leo Strauss, although it is of Platonic provenance – namely, the famous principle of *logographic necessity*, initially formulated by Socrates in the *Phaedrus* (264b) as essential for whatever might prove to be a piece of a good speech. Strauss adopts this principle and restates it as a basic hermeneutic principle of Plato's own work: 'The good writing achieves its end if the reader considers carefully the "logographic necessity" of every part, however small or seemingly insignificant,

13 One thing, among many others, that Ebert overlooks is the fact that not only the author, Plato, but also the dramatic persona of Socrates as narrator of a conversation that has already taken place, is well aware of its overall progress when he starts the narration. The perceptive reader, therefore, should not ignore the fact that Socrates's choice to begin his account with the word κατέβην reflects this awareness, including the discussion on the descent into the cave (I owe this remark to a comment made by Maria Pavlou, co-editor of the present volume).

14 Cf. Thanassas (2017) 143–144.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

of the writing; […] nothing is accidental in a Platonic dialogue; everything is necessary at the place where it occurs'.[15] Yet, it is obvious that this principle can easily result in a practice of over-interpretation, or can even serve to validate the legitimacy of this practice. Against such a danger, we must mitigate the scope and validity of the principle: It is *not* the case that *every* detail can be appropriated as the conscious, intentional decision or choice of an author, nor, even if that were the case, can we as readers reconstruct the entire intellectual universe of an author. The principle of logographic necessity, in its extreme, unrestrained application, leads to the impasse of psychologism, and it should be restricted to a heuristic function: as a reminder of the necessity of searching for meaning, as a declaration of an expectation of meaning, which nevertheless never attains its complete fulfilment. In other words, in a Platonic dialogue everything has *potentially* some philosophical significance, but this potentiality can never transform itself into the actuality of a complete hermeneutic explication and clarification.

2 The Whole and Its Proems

If, however, as I have argued, the inclusion of the whole of a Platonic dialogue is necessary in every attempt to understand its opening part, then the first question we might ask is: What is the 'whole' of the *Republic*? As we all know, the *Republic* is the second longest Platonic dialogue and addresses a panoply of topics: morality, politics, law, education, theology, aesthetics, psychology, ontology, epistemology, philosophy of nature (astronomy), metaphysics. Is there a thread linking the treatment of these manifold subjects? Or do we rather stay in front of an unrelated, paratactic, 'rhapsodic' plot? The most recent detailed discussion of these issues shows some inclination towards the second option; D. Schur remarks: 'Although it is easy to single out one topic and give it precedence, and even to proclaim that a conclusive understanding of that topic has been reached, the book does not make this claim. Instead, the topic of the book is a constantly moving target […]'.[16] Yet, I would like to argue that this position is potentially misleading. The topic of the book is indeed marked by mobility, variability, even procrastination, but the multiplicity and diversity of

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15 Strauss (1964) 54, 60. Cf. also Strauss (1958) 121: 'The perfect book or speech obeys in every respect the pure and merciless laws of what has been called logographic necessity. The perfect speech contains nothing slipshod; in it there are no loose threads; it contains no word that has been picked at random'.

16 Schur (2015) 64–65.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

the issues under discussion, even the confusion occasionally caused by this uncertainty, does not exclude the presence and pursuit of a specific, fundamental target/question, which finally upholds the unity of the dialogue.[17] Even if the target sometimes appears to be moving, to be skipped or even forgotten, it remains present, having been formulated already in the initial stages of the text.

The goal, starting point and lasting question of the dialogue is the question about the essence of justice, in its association with the wider and more comprehensive question: 'how should one live?' This latter question is explicitly articulated for the first time towards the end of the first Book, when Socrates points out to Thrasymachus: 'οὐ γὰρ περὶ τοῦ ἐπιτυχόντος ὁ λόγος, ἀλλὰ περὶ τοῦ ὅντινα τρόπον χρὴ ζῆν (352d)'. 'After all, the argument concerns no ordinary topic, but the way we ought to live'.[18] The issue was raised already earlier, in different words, when Socrates posed to Thrasymachus the following rhetorical question:

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ: ἢ σμικρὸν οἴει ἐπιχειρεῖν πρᾶγμα διορίζεσθαι, ἀλλ' οὐ βίου διαγωγήν, ᾗ ἂν διαγόμενος ἕκαστος ἡμῶν λυσιτελεστάτην ζωὴν ζῴη; (344d-e)

SOCRATES: Or do you think it is a trivial matter you are trying to determine, and not rather a way of life – the one that would make living life that way most profitable for each of us?

The question of how to live is the question about the most profitable way of life: it is the question of happiness, the pursuit of which underlies as a clear, undeniable precondition to every (Platonic) ethical inquiry. This precondition has been expressively formulated by Socrates, who not only has presented the question of the way of life as conceptually identical to the question of happiness, but has rushed to include within this context the issue of justice: εἰ δὲ καὶ ἄμεινον ζῶσιν οἱ δίκαιοι τῶν ἀδίκων καὶ εὐδαιμονέστεροί εἰσιν, […] σκεπτέον (352d; 'we have to examine […] whether just people also live better and are happier than unjust ones').

The answer, therefore, to the question 'which way of life?' unfolds as a version of a further attempt to determine the content and the nature of

17 Cf. also Clay (1992) 115: 'the end of Platonic criticism is to discover the unity of a dialogue in the confusion, diversity, and fundamentally elliptical character of its themes'.

18 Quotations of the Greek text are taken from the edition offered by S.R. Slings: *Plato, Respublica*, Oxford 2003. Translations are based on Reeve (2004); occasional alterations to Reeve's translation are not indicated. The same topic is raised also in the *Gorgias*, a dialogue whose subject matter is closely related to that of the *Republic*: ὅντινα χρὴ τρόπον ζῆν (*Grg*. 500c).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

happiness. Justice as a way of life will only be considered in view of its relationship to happiness and its possible contribution to the happy life. Justice, therefore, does not appear to be an autonomous moral value, nor is it a moral mandate imposed from above; its pursuit only makes sense if it contributes to the achievement of happiness. This, of course, does not make justice merely an instrumental means to achieving happiness, nor does it mean that the connection between justice and happiness is one of external causality. In one of the most important Platonic studies of the last few decades, T. Irwin[19] has shown that justice contributes to happiness not as an external factor influencing it casually, but as an inherent – and even as the most important, the 'dominant' – part of it. This crucial role appears reasonable in the light of the definition of justice as the inner coherence and balance of the soul: this balance is the natural state of the soul and can be called happiness. Justice is a form of *eudaimonia*.[20]

While the identification of the central thematic aim of the whole of the *Republic* appears relatively simple and rather unquestionable, things are different with respect to the proem, which remains a difficult and complex matter. The difficulty does not affect only the interpretative approach and assessment of the initial part of the dialogue, but is intensified by the diversity of answers that could be given to the simple question: 'what is exactly the proem of the *Republic*?' A similar question might also arise in view of other Platonic dialogues. And if for the framed dialogues (such as *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Theaetetus* or *Parmenides*) we could content ourselves with the schematic response that their proems coincide with the initial external frame within which the subsequent dialogue takes place, the question of the proem of a narrated dialogue (such as the *Republic*) is not always so simple. There are four possible answers one could give to this question. The proem to the *Republic* could be:

19 See Irwin (1995) 190–193, restated in Irwin (1999b) 174–178. Irwin sets out this position in the context of an analysis of the tripartite distinction of goods, which will be discussed later (see below, Section 6). Justice will be characterised there as a good worthwhile not only for its own sake, but also because of its consequences, which are beneficial for its owner.

20 This basic position is also reflected in the title of the present text, which slightly transforms the title of the well-known, important publication by Vlastos on 'Justice and Happiness in the *Republic*', first published in 1969. The present study deviates from that of Vlastos in two ways: thematically, I will focus on Books 1 and 2, instead of 4; and methodologically, I will try to show the consistency and validity of the Platonic position, rather than focus on the discovery of an 'error in the argument' and on its subsequent correction, as Vlastos does; see Vlastos (1981) 131 and 133.

(i) the first sentence of the text, or even the first word: 'I went down' (κατέβην, 327a);[21]
(ii) the first scene of the dialogue (327a-328c): the Socratic description of his encounter with Polemarchus, who forces Socrates to follow him to his house, where the remainder of discussion will take place;
(iii) the first Book (327a-354c);
(iv) the first part of the text, extending up to the 'Simile of the Letters' (369b), which lays the foundation for the subsequent discussion on justice as a property of both the city and the individual.

Thus, with respect to the *Republic*, it is not even clear which part of the text should be considered to be the proem.[22] In trying to incorporate all four possible options,[23] the present analysis will attempt (in Sections 3–6) to hermeneutically approach these four parts of the text in order to demonstrate the specific proemial character of each. In the concluding Section I will attempt to synthesise these proemial explications in a way that allows for a comprehensive understanding of the dialogue as a whole.

One might object to this approach, arguing that the enumeration and parallel examination of these four versions only causes an unnecessary (or even unjustified) complexity, since the extent of the *Republic*'s proem (as one might claim) is clearly outlined within the text. At the beginning of Book 2, the discussion of Book 1 between Socrates, Cephalus, his son Polemarchus and the Sophist Thrasymachus is characterised by Socrates himself as a 'proem': Ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν ταῦτα εἰπὼν ᾤμην λόγου ἀπηλλάχθαι· τὸ δ' ἦν ἄρα, ὡς ἔοικε, προοίμιον (357a; 'Having said this, I thought I had done with the discussion. But it all turned out to be only a prelude'). If, therefore, we take seriously the use of this term by Socrates, we must confirm option (iii) above and identify the first Book as the proem to the dialogue. But simplifying our inquiry in this way,

21 This, of course, would be a very broad and rather unconventional understanding of what might function as proem in a text.

22 Indicatively, Irwin already speaks of two introductions to the *Republic*: the first coincides with Book 1 and the second extends over a part of Book 2, see Irwin (1995) 169; (1999b) 164. Strangely enough, though, Irwin (1995) 181 presents as 'second introduction' the section up to 368c, without thus including in it the Simile of the Letters. Höffe (1997) 69, on the other hand, rightly sees in the passage 369b 'a double change of perspective: methodically and thematically'.

23 The character and function of a proem is extensively discussed in the *Laws*, where (among other things) the polysemy and multiple function of legal preambles is recognised and emphasised. The Athenian stresses there that 'it is not very easy to confine their exposition to a single type' (οὐ πάνυ ῥᾴδιον ἐν ἑνὶ περιλαβόντα εἰπεῖν αὐτὰ οἷόν τινι τύπῳ, 718c); cf. also Thanassas (2002) 99.

even if it were desirable, is not so obvious or undisputable; for as we all know, function, origin and character of Book 1 have been repeatedly questioned. It is often argued that this Book originally constituted a separate dialogue (*Thrasymachus*), which was later included by Plato in the *Republic*, retaining, however, its significant differences in style, language and content from the subsequent Books 2–10.[24] If this account is true, and Book 1 is in fact a foreign body, subsequently and externally stitched into the text, then it cannot really function as a proem – given our understanding of a proem as an introductory piece of a text that functions as organic part of the whole and that has been intentionally designed as such by the author. The characterisation of Book 1 by Socrates as a prelude would then be a way of concealing the fact that it is external to the text; it would present a Platonic attempt to obscure the fact that Book 1, now prefacing his text, was initially a different, earlier dialogue.

In any case, this explicit characterisation of Book 1 as the prelude corroborates the need for a co-examination and mutual enlightenment of part (proem) and whole, along the lines discussed above (Section 1). We see, namely, that the claim of Book 1 to the status of a 'prelude' takes place only at the beginning of Book 2. Socrates makes it clear that, within the context of the conversation presented in Book 1, he had the impression that the topics discussed there were the main body of the debate; only the objections raised by the 'courageous' Glaucon (357a) will show that the main part has not even begun yet. The proemic character of a section, therefore, does not arise out of the section itself, but only in its confrontation with the whole text; and the limits between proem and main part are not always clear, but prove sometimes to be fluid or porous.[25] It seems, therefore, that the Socratic characterisation of Book 1 as a 'prelude' is not sufficient to conclusively determine it as the *Republic*'*s* proem. The question of the character of this Book, and its relation to the rest of the dialogue, will obviously be of central importance throughout the discussion of all four options outlined above, and will be explored as one of the basic questions in the final Section 7.

24 The first to give voice to this view was Hermann, who claimed not only that Book 1 was 'a work which originally existed for itself […] and was only later prefixed by Plato, quasi as an introduction to the larger whole' (Hermann [1839] 539), but also that the whole *Republic* was the result of a 'successive genesis' (537), and that the text can be distinguished into 'four or five bulks', the production of which took place in different times (539): Books 5–7 'were apparently integrated only later' (540), but also 10 'was added to the former [Books] only after a certain time' (540). The 'athetesis' of Book 1 found many supporters throughout the 20th century, with Vlastos (1991) 248–251 presenting the most forceful arguments. Details of the preceding discussion are set forth by Guthrie (1975) 437.

25 I owe this remark to a comment made by Maria Pavlou, co-editor of the present volume.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

3 First Word(s)

According to an anecdotal report, Plato attached great importance to the first words of the *Republic* and repeatedly worked them out in numerous versions, which allegedly survived until his death.[26] The very first sentence of the dialogue, as spoken by Socrates, provides the reader with the most important elements of the dramatic context of the dialogue:

> Κατέβην χθὲς εἰς Πειραιᾶ μετὰ Γλαύκωνος τοῦ Ἀρίστωνος προσευξόμενός τε τῇ θεῷ καὶ ἅμα τὴν ἑορτὴν βουλόμενος θεάσασθαι τίνα τρόπον ποιήσουσιν ἅτε νῦν πρῶτον ἄγοντες (327a).
> I went down to the Piraeus yesterday with Glaucon, the son of Ariston, to say a prayer to the goddess, and also because I wanted to see how they would manage the festival, since they were holding it for the first time.

The wider context is therefore a celebration taking place in Piraeus in honour of a goddess worshiped this year for the first time. The narrator is Socrates – although his identity will only be revealed later, in 327c, when one of his interlocutors (Polemarchus) will address him by his name.[27] Plato, however, insists on signifying his own presence already in the first sentence: Glaucon is the first name explicitly mentioned in the work, and the addendum τοῦ Ἀρίστωνος is an implicit self-referential indication of the author, who is himself 'son of Ariston'.[28] Furthermore, even as a sound, the name Γλαύκωνος could easily be perceived as a paronomasia of Πλάτωνος, and functions thus also as reminder of and implicit reference to the author of the work. This self-reference has a twofold character: it is a trace of Plato's presence as author, but also an unambiguous reminder of his absence from the dramatic evolution of the dialogue – thus emphasising the role of the author as distinct from the endodiegetic narrator and serving as a hint to the fictional character of the conversation to come.[29]

Plato's careful and skilful self-presentation, combined with the initial uncertainty about the narrator's identity, confronts the reader from the outset

26 The story is reported by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Comp*. 25.209 Usener-Radermacher); but see also Burnyeat's critical remarks (1997) 309.

27 On this 'initial anonymity', see also the reflections offered by Schur (2015) 68.

28 The character of the Socratic references to 'Ariston's son' as Platonic self-references has been pointed out by Sedley (1995) 4–5. Ebert (2002) 71–72 has counted that these references occur four times throughout the *Republic*.

29 The present Platonic self-reference is therefore similar to that in *Phaedo*: 'But Plato, I think, was sick' (Πλάτων δὲ οἶμαι ἠσθένει, 59b).

with a question about the author's relationship to Socrates. There are at least two different ways that we could ask this question: On the one hand, we could ask how Plato's relationship with his teacher, the historical Socrates, is shaped and expressed in the *Republic*; on the other hand, we could inquire into the relationship between the author and Socrates as a character in the dialogue. These questions, of course, cannot be discussed in the present study, but they seem to arise already in the first sentence of the text, in a way that seems to be intended and anticipated by Plato himself through his choice to make a clear reference to his own indirect presence and to leave the narrator's identity in some suspension.

The author, however, will not miss the chance to emphasise the piety of Socrates, which is not shaken by the fact that it is inspired by a new goddess, whose cult has just been introduced to the city of Athens. The connotation is clear: convicted for impiety and for introducing new deities, Socrates appears here to display all possible religious devotion, while the new deities are not imported by him but by his fellow citizens who will condemn him a few years later.[30] All this takes place in Piraeus: a city branded as the centre of commerce, the district of the 'alien residents' (μέτοικοι) of Athens, and a stronghold of democracy.[31] The longest conversation ever undertaken by the Platonic Socrates (that recounted in the *Republic*) will thus take place outside the walls of Athens; not, however, at a distance from it, but in a space and context that intensifies the tension between Socrates and his environment. In some way, Socrates is 'in the wolf's mouth' here. He is on the home turf of the democrats who will later condemn him; in a wealthy environment, to which he has always been indifferent; and a guest of a family of migrants, i.e. people without full political rights, and thus, by definition, excluded from participating in the life of a city with which he has consciously identified his personal destiny. And all this takes place in a harbour, a place that, according to the

30 Sesonske (1966) 43 offers a nice and comprehensive description of 'Plato's irony' in this passage: Meletus should have brought a charge against the Thracians, not against Socrates; but for the Athenian society, 'religion has become entertainment and spectacle'. The dramatic chronology of the *Republic* is still controversial. Guthrie (1975) 438 refers to various accounts before agreeing with Taylor 'that most of the time he [Plato] had a date about 421 in mind'. Nails (2002) 324–326 gives exhaustive evidence for her position that the *Republic* 'was not edited from the standpoint of dramatic date; thus, there would be jarring anachronisms if any of the candidate specific dates between 432 and 404 were assigned definitely'.

31 The piety attributed by Plato to Socrates, as well as the character of Piraeus as a 'bulwark of Attic democracy', are also highlighted by Ebert (2002) 70.

Laws, is by definition dangerous to the moral cohesion of its inhabitants and of the entire city.[32]

The daytrip of Socrates to Piraeus is characterised as a 'descent' (κατέβην). This first word of the text was certainly carefully selected by Plato for its emblematic significance,[33] and has been the subject of a thorough discussion in the recent decades. This analysis has mainly drawn attention to one extrinsic and two intra-textual connections of κατέβην:

a. The word recalls the descent of the Homeric Odysseus to Hades[34] and thus makes Piraeus a kind of earthly Hades.[35]
b. The word anticipates the descent of Er to Hades, at the end of Book 10. After recounting the myth of Er, in the last sentence of the dialogue, Socrates exhorts Glaucon 'to always hold to the upward path'.[36] Thus, the *Republic* possesses the characteristics of a typical ring composition.
c. The word is linked with the Allegory of the Cave and the descent presented there as obligatory for the philosopher, when he returns to the cave after having discovered the truth:

> καταβατέον οὖν ἐν μέρει ἑκάστῳ εἰς τὴν τῶν ἄλλων συνοίκησιν καὶ συνεθιστέον τὰ σκοτεινὰ θεάσασθαι· συνεθιζόμενοι γὰρ μυρίῳ βέλτιον ὄψεσθε τῶν ἐκεῖ καὶ γνώσεσθε ἕκαστα τὰ εἴδωλα ἅττα ἐστὶ καὶ ὧν, διὰ τὸ τἀληθῆ ἑωρακέναι καλῶν τε καὶ δικαίων καὶ ἀγαθῶν πέρι (520c).

32 Cf. *Leg.* 705a: 'to have the sea nearby is pleasant enough for the purpose of everyday life, but in fact it is a "salty-sharp and bitter neighbor" in more senses than one. It fills the land with wholesaling and retailing, breeds shifty and deceitful habits in a man's soul, and makes the citizens distrustful and hostile, not only among themselves, but also in their dealings with the world outside' (πρόσοικος γὰρ θάλαττα χώρᾳ τὸ μὲν παρ' ἑκάστην ἡμέραν ἡδύ, μάλα γε μὴν ὄντως ἁλμυρὸν καὶ πικρὸν γειτόνημα· ἐμπορίας γὰρ καὶ χρηματισμοῦ διὰ καπηλείας ἐμπιμπλᾶσα αὐτήν, ἤθη παλίμβολα καὶ ἄπιστα ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἐντίκτουσα, αὐτήν τε πρὸς αὑτὴν τὴν πόλιν ἄπιστον καὶ ἄφιλον ποιεῖ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους ὡσαύτως, trans. T.J. Saunders).

33 Clay (1992) 113 highlights the importance of beginnings and first words for ancient readers, with a specific reference to the *Iliad* (μῆνιν): 'Indeed, the first words of a poem rather than its "title" were enough to identify it'.

34 Cf. *Od.* 23.252: 'on the day when I went down into the house of Hades' (ἤματι τῷ, ὅτε δὴ κατέβην δόμον Ἄϊδος εἴσω).

35 This aspect was mainly emphasised by Voegelin, who saw in the verb a double 'symbolism of depth and descent' (1999 [1957]) 107, with the second trait prevailing. Voegelin adds a series of interesting observations about 'pamphylism' as a common feature of Piraeus as an egalitarian space and Hades as the common destination of mortals (1999) 108.

36 τῆς ἄνω ὁδοῦ ἀεὶ ἑξόμεθα (621c). Cf. especially Clay (1992) 127: 'the end of the *Republic* returns to its beginning'.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

> So each of you in turn must go down to live in the common dwelling place of the other citizens and grow accustomed to seeing in the dark. For when you are used to it, you will see infinitely better than the people there and know precisely what each image is, and also what it is an image of, because you have seen the truth about fine, just, and good things.

This third correlation has been extensively analysed by M.F. Burnyeat (1997), who identifies following pairings in the two passages: κατέβην – καταβατέον, τὴν ἑορτὴν θεάσασθαι – τὰ σκοτεινὰ θεάσασθαι, καλὴ ἡ πομπή – καλῶν πέρι. Piraeus is thus revealed as a picture of the life in the cave, and the opening verb κατέβην anticipates the obligation of the philosopher to return to the cave and rule there.[37]

Burnyeat does not ignore the other two connotations of κατέβην: the descents of Odysseus and of Er.[38] He is also the only scholar who takes a clear stand on the status of these links. Whereas others, like Voegelin, hover between regarding them as 'associations' or as 'symbols',[39] Burnyeat clearly states his preference for the Neoplatonic suggestion and treats the preludes as 'images or reflections, in some appropriate sense, of the substantive philosophical content of the work to hand'.[40] For a typical expression of this suggestion, Burnyeat refers to Proclus' Commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*:

> Δεῖ γὰρ ἐπὶ τῶν Πλάτωνος διαλόγων εἰς τὰ πράγματα βλέπειν διαφερόντως τὰ ὑποκείμενα τῷ διαλόγῳ, καὶ σκοπεῖν ὅπως καὶ τὰ προοίμια ταῦτα ἐνεικονίζεται, καὶ ἓν ἀποφαίνειν ζῶον ἐκ πάντων τῶν μερῶν ἑαυτῷ συμφωνοῦν, ἕκαστον ἀπειργασμένον, ὡς αὐτὸς ἐν Φαίδρῳ φησί.
> In studying any Platonic dialogue, we must look especially at the matters that are its subject and see how the details of the prologue prefigure them. In this way we should show that each of them is perfectly worked out, a living being harmonious in all its parts, as Plato says in the *Phaedrus*.[41]

37 Cf. Burnyeat (1997) 310–312.

38 Despite the fact that the title of his study is 'First Words', Burnyeat omits any reference to Clay's 'Plato's First Words' (1992), or to earlier major studies such as the one by Voegelin (1999).

39 Cf. Voegelin (1999) 108 or 106 and *passim*.

40 Burnyeat (1997) 309.

41 *In. Prm.* 659.12-18.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

If, however, we read it carefully, this Proclean passage reveals a certain tension. On the one hand, the preludes are merely images of the substantial philosophical issues that are raised in the dialogue; on the other hand, regarded as a vital part of the dialogue, the prelude could play the same role as the other parts of the dialogue – namely, as a co-determinant of the character of the dialogue as a whole. In any case, Burnyeat's perception of the passage is only sensitive to the first of these two options, adheres to the logic of ἐνεικόνισις, and finally compares the preludes of the dialogues to the openings of operas: 'The opera explains the overture, not vice versa. Only when you know the opera, can you "read" and really savour the overture'.[42]

There are many experts (music theorists, artists, or even just friends of the opera) who would find the idea that an overture lacks any autonomous meaning and, on its own, produces no aesthetic pleasure a rather crude approach. This, however, is not the place to enter into a debate on music theory. Instead, I will restrict myself to pointing out that this one-sided description of the relationship between an overture and the whole of an opera is belied by the very fact that many overtures are often performed on their own in concerts. In any case, the second version of Proclus, which presents the preludes as elements of a whole 'living being harmonious in all its parts', appears to be more convincing and appropriate. The consequence of this conception for understanding the first phrase of the *Republic* will be examined in the next section.

4 First Scene

The first scene of the *Republic* spans one and a half Stephanus pages (327a-328c), and its content is well-known. Having completed their participation in the celebration of the new goddess (with prayer and watching of the spectacles organised), and while planning to return to Athens, Socrates and Glaucon meet Polemarchus and his escort, who were also returning from the procession. Polemarchus persuades them to head all together to his home, where another group of people is waiting for them; one of these people is Cephalus (Polemarchus' father), who will become the first of Socrates's interlocutors. There are at least four main points worth discussing in this short part of the dialogue.

42 Burnyeat (1997) 308. This analogy is also suggested by Kahn (1993) 140, who characterises Book 1 as an 'overture to an opera in which all the major themes are briefly and tentatively presented'.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

(i) Through the course of his narrative the Platonic Socrates names a total of ten persons who will eventually come together in the house of Polemarchus and will be present in the dialogue – although some of them will not actively participate in the conversation. As members of Polemarchus' entourage, when he met Socrates, are named only Adeimantus, brother of Glaucon (who at that time was accompanying Socrates), and Niceratus. When they all arrive at the house of Polemarchus, they meet there: the brothers of the latter, Lysias and Euthydemus, their father Cephalus, the sophist Thrasymachus, as well as two other persons probably escorting the latter: Clitophon and Charmantides. Thus Socrates, as narrator, mentions ten names in total, without indicating a clear criterion of this choice. If he wanted to mention those who were actively involved in the discussion, he would only have had to mention six of them;[43] and if he wanted to mention all persons present, he should not have omitted many of them with the phrase 'and some others' (καὶ ἄλλοι τινές, 327c). We can assume, therefore, that Plato deliberately intended to mention ten names. And the most convincing explanation proposed for this suggests a connotative reference to the so-called Ten of Piraeus: the ten rulers appointed by the Thirty Tyrants as commanders of the harbour.[44] Of course, there is no clear indication that Plato intends this to be such a reference (and this is an example of the limitations that should be set on an extreme, dogmatic application of the principle of logographic necessity). I will therefore confine myself to indicating that the account of ten names functions as an implicit emphasis of the political context of the dialogue: the philosopher Socrates is compelled to philosophise in a sphere constantly exposed to political turmoil.[45]

(ii) Another element in this opening scene is the humorous episode in which Polemarchus 'coerces' Socrates to follow him to his home. When Polemarchus sees Socrates, he immediately sends the servant to hold his garments and thus delay him, so that Polemarchus can get ahead of him. The following dialogue ensues:

> Ὦ Σώκρατες, δοκεῖτέ μοι πρὸς ἄστυ ὡρμῆσθαι ὡς ἀπιόντες.
> Οὐ γὰρ κακῶς δοξάζεις, ἦν δ' ἐγώ.

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43 Thus excluding Niceratus, Lysias, Euthydemus and Charmantides.

44 This explanation was given by Strauss (1964) 62–63, who also points out that five of the ten men mentioned were Athenians, four of them metics, and one of them (Thrasymachus) an alien.

45 This setting is also accentuated by the average reader's knowledge of the fate of some of the attendants: Polemarchus and Niceratus will be executed by the Thirty, Lysias will be exiled and will lose his property. The resulting paradox is pointed out by Strauss (1964) 63: in the *Republic*, Socrates 'discusses justice in the presence of victims of an abortive attempt made by most unjust men to restore justice'.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Ὁρᾷς οὖν ἡμᾶς, ἔφη, ὅσοι ἐσμέν;
Πῶς γὰρ οὔ;
Ἢ τοίνυν τούτων, ἔφη, κρείττους γένεσθε ἢ μένετ᾽ αὐτοῦ.
Οὐκοῦν, ἦν δ᾽ ἐγώ, ἔτι λείπεται τὸ ἢν πείσωμεν ὑμᾶς ὡς χρὴ ἡμᾶς ἀφεῖναι;
Ἦ καὶ δύναισθ᾽ ἄν, ἦ δ᾽ ὅς, πεῖσαι μὴ ἀκούοντας;
Οὐδαμῶς, ἔφη ὁ Γλαύκων.
Ὡς τοίνυν μὴ ἀκουσομένων, οὕτω διανοεῖσθε (327c).
It looks to me, Socrates, as if you two are hurrying to get away to town.
That isn't a bad guess.
But do you see how many we are?
Certainly.
Well, then, either you must prove yourselves stronger than all these people or you will have to stay here.
Isn't there another alternative still: that we persuade you that you should let us go?
But could you persuade us, if we won't listen?
There is no way we could, said Glaucon.
Well, we won't listen; you had better make up your mind to that.

The exchange reflects a kind of witticism from both sides, but of course if we consider humour incompatible with seriousness and incapable of generating philosophical meaning, we would exclude ourselves from accessing a large part of Platonic philosophy. In its dramatic simplicity and naturalness, the passage sets out the fundamental problem of philosophy and more generally of *logos*: how do we discuss with someone who does not want to hear or does not share the necessary prerequisites for dialogue? In the *Phaedo*, Plato had attempted to answer this question by stressing the need for the interlocutor to share the necessary, fundamental, clear, simple 'hypothesis' of Forms; otherwise, as the Platonic Socrates recommends there, 'if anyone attacked the hypothesis itself, you would dismiss him, and you wouldn't answer till you should have examined its consequences'.[46] This advice, of course, does not solve the problem, it merely names and defines it, delineating at the same time the position of philosophy. In the face of a refusal to listen, *logos*, argument, reason and persuasion remain powerless, and against physical violence, the philosopher remains weak and helpless.

46 εἰ δέ τις αὐτῆς τῆς ὑποθέσεως ἔχοιτο, χαίρειν ἐῴης ἂν καὶ οὐκ ἀποκρίναιο (101d). I follow the proposal to read ἔχοιτο as 'attack', 'take issue with', and not as 'cling to', 'hung on to'; cf. (among many others) van Eck (1996) 221 n. 10.

(iii) But ultimately, after the completion of this humorous exchange, Adeimantus will help Socrates overcome his hesitancy and persuade him to stay by telling him that the feast is not over yet, and there is a torch race scheduled for the evening. Socrates seems impressed: Ἀφ᾽ ἵππων; ἦν δ᾽ ἐγώ· καινόν γε τοῦτο (328a; 'On horseback? – I said. That is something new!'). Polemarchus concludes the persuasion by promising that after dinner they will return to the feast, in order to watch the spectacle, and will attend the all-night celebration, in which they will have the opportunity to chat with many 'young men'. It seems, therefore, that the solution to the impasse humorously created by Plato is achieved through persuasion and through an argument based on a promise – which will prove to be false! The promise of a torch race, horses and a nightly celebration will never be fulfilled. On the contrary, both Socrates and Polemarchus will forget it, since Socrates and his companions will sink into a conversation that will last for many hours.

(iv) More precisely, Socrates does not overcome his hesitancy by himself, but is persuaded through two interventions made by his companion Glaucon, who twice advocates the decision to remain in Piraeus. When the servant grabs Socrates' cloak and asks him to wait for Polemarchus to arrive, Glaucus intervenes and agrees: 'All right, we will wait'.[47] And once again, after the promises made by Polemarchus and Adeimantus, it is Glaucon who will intervene to determine the outcome: 'It looks as if we will have to stay'.[48]

If we attempt to summarise all these aspects of the first scene, including the first sentence of the text, we will hardly confirm Burnyeat's position that these elements can be understood only through what follows. Nor can Ebert's opposite position, that these elements should not be correlated with what follows, be confirmed. Above all, it is not convincing to claim that here we are not dealing with 'real' philosophy, but with an external, superficial dramatic context that only announces the forthcoming philosophical discourse without being a part of it. If Platonic philosophy, at least as it is depicted in the dialogues,[49] is a dialogic philosophy which unfolds as a mimetic presentation of real conversations, then the dialogic context, the circumstances, the motives and causes of the conversations depicted in the written texts cannot be philosophically indifferent or excluded from what might count as 'real' philosophy. This is especially the case for the first scene of the Platonic *Republic*, in which:

47 Ἀλλὰ περιμενοῦμεν, ἦ δ᾽ ὃς ὁ Γλαύκων (327b).

48 Ἔοικεν, ἔφη, μενετέον εἶναι (328b).

49 I.e.: excluding the other, second aspect of Platonic philosophy, as it is exposed in Plato's 'unwritten doctrines'.

– Plato signals his own presence as author, and, at the same time, the fictional character of the conversation from which he was absent.

And in which Socrates:

– temporarily descends into the political realm and gets exposed to its upheavals and turmoil (democratic Piraeus vs. Ten of Piraeus), driven by curiosity and piety;
– maintains his distance from this realm and wishes to return as soon as possible to his familiar environs;
– confronts the weakness of philosophy, when faced with violence or the denial of dialogue;
– is persuaded to spend more time in Piraeus, on the grounds of a promise that is never kept, and under the pressure of the interventions of his friend and companion Glaucon;
– finally, disregards the promise; instead of torches and spectacles, he will eventually get involved in something far preferable to him – a philosophical discussion.

None of these aspects are fully dependent on what follows, nor completely unrelated to it. Their meaning is at first self-sustained, but also gets *enriched* through the course of the dialogue. The philosopher's stay in Piraeus, for example, will take on a completely different character when it ceases to be an element of political exposure and turns into a possibility of philosophical advancement and an emphasis on the role of philosophy. The philosophy will finally overshadow and surpass the descent into politics and the exposure to political conflict, the risk of violence and the dependence on spectacles. Philosophy will ultimately consolidate its autonomy – as shown in the discussion that will begin immediately in the house of Polemarchus.

5 First Book

After the first scene, described above, the rest of the first Book includes conversations between Socrates and three of those present in Polemarchus' house: the host's father (and apparently former owner of the house) Cephalus, the host Polemarchus and the guest and well-known sophist Thrasymachus. Obviously, these discussions, which in the past decades have been the object of an extensive examination with many productive results, cannot be analysed here in their entirety. I will therefore confine myself to certain aspects of these discussions that seem crucial and essential for the proemic character of Book 1.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Cephalus welcomes Socrates, with an attitude that bears some features of grandiosity, which Socrates faces with subtle but rather obvious irony – i.e. when Socrates asks Cephalus, since he is an old man, to give some 'life lessons' based on the experience he has gathered. Cephalus then talks about physical pleasures and the experience of aging, pronounces his piety and faith in the afterlife, and indicates the importance and value of wealth in life.[50] In response to Socrates's question on the 'greatest good' (μέγιστον ἀγαθόν, 330d) he enjoyed as a result of his wealth, Cephalus emphasises the contribution of wealth to moral life and to the avoidance of injustice.[51] Thus, the topics of goodness and justice are already introduced at this early point in the dialogue, and Socrates does not miss the opportunity to thematise them. This thematisation marks at the same time a shift in the dialogue from the field of raw life experience to that of philosophy. Socrates has remained in Piraeus, but he tries to escape from a debate that is thoughtlessly driven by aphorisms offered by traditional morality, exhortations presented by poets, or demonstrations of a superficial piety; he attempts instead to shape his stay there on his own terms. To be clear, Cephalus is not, as has often been argued, an immoral plutocrat who believes that virtue can be bought:[52] wealth does not generate virtue, only contributes to it, and this only on the condition that its holder is 'good and orderly' (ἐπιεικής, 331b). Cephalus even shows a quasi-philosophical disposition, when he demonstrates a correct understanding of causality, which emphasises (329b) that universality is a necessary feature of a real causal relationship. All this, of course, is not sufficient for him to follow Socrates in his attempt to *decontextualise* the debate, shifting it from the field of personal experience to that of a conceptual analysis.[53]

50 We observe, however, a certain distance retained by Cephalus from an extreme aspiration of enrichment, when he undertakes a genealogy of his family's wealth: 'As a moneymaker I am in between my grandfather and my father' (μέσος τις γέγονα χρηματιστὴς τοῦ τε πάππου καὶ τοῦ πατρός, 330b). This genealogy seems to schematically describe the following evolution in three generations: If, for instance, the grandfather of our own Cephalus, named Cephalus I, started with a property of 100 units and increased it to 200, his son Lysanias reduced it from 200 to 80, and our Cephalus II brought it back from 80 to 100 units.

51 The relevant terms, such as δίκη and its cognates (ἀδικήσαντα, ἄδικον, δικαίως etc.) are used by Cephalus six times in only a few lines (330d-331a). There is no ground, therefore, for Kersting's statement (1999) 18 that the issue of justice is only introduced by Socrates, while Cephalus 'has not even mentioned justice at all'.

52 One of the most negative outlines of Cephalus is offered by Annas (1981) 18–21.

53 I use here a term by Kersting (1999) 19, 'Dekontextualisierung'. We must, of course, emphasise that (from a Platonic point of view) conceptual analysis is not possible in the absence of experience.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

It is finally Socrates who attempts to distil Cephalus' position into a quasi definition, pointing out at the same time that it is inadequate and must be rejected: Οὐκ ἄρα οὗτος ὅρος ἐστὶν δικαιοσύνης, ἀληθῆ τε λέγειν καὶ ἃ ἂν λάβῃ τις ἀποδιδόναι (331d; Then the following is not the definition of justice: to speak the truth and repay what one has borrowed). However, the very first rupture that Socrates reveals in this view will cause Cephalus to withdraw, preferring to deal with a pending sacrifice and delivering the baton to Polemarchus: the heir of his property will also become the 'heir to the discussion' (ὁ τοῦ λόγου κληρονόμος, 331e) and will attempt to support the paternal belief by invoking the authority of Simonides. In the following five pages, Polemarchus will propose three different definitions of justice:

Π1 τὸ τὰ ὀφειλόμενα ἑκάστῳ ἀποδιδόναι δίκαιόν ἐστι (331e).
it is just to give to each what is owed to him.

Π2 [a] τοῖς γὰρ φίλοις οἴεται ὀφείλειν τοὺς φίλους ἀγαθὸν μέν τι δρᾶν, κακὸν δὲ μηδέν (332a).
[b] ὀφείλεται δέ γε, οἶμαι, παρά γε τοῦ ἐχθροῦ τῷ ἐχθρῷ ὅπερ καὶ προσήκει, κακόν τι (332b).
[a] friends owe something good to their friends, never something bad.
[b] what an enemy owes an enemy, in my view, is also precisely what is appropriate – something bad.

Π3 ἔστιν δίκαιον τὸν μὲν φίλον ἀγαθὸν ὄντα εὖ ποιεῖν, τὸν δ' ἐχθρὸν κακὸν ὄντα βλάπτειν (335a).
it is just to treat a friend well, provided he is good, and to harm an enemy, provided he is bad.

The first definition of justice is attributed to Simonides and appears as a version of Cephalus' position. Π2 and Π3 are adjustments of Π1, which Polemarchus is compelled to endorse under the pressure of Socratic questioning. Socrates initially emphasises the need to overcome the poetic authority of Simonides through the hermeneutic mediation of his verses.[54] He then shows that none

54 Socrates does not directly challenge Simonides, but stresses the need to understand what exactly he means (τοῦτο ὅτι ποτὲ λέγει, 331e). Irwin's position (1995) 173–174 instead, is hardly convincing, when he maintains that Socrates treats Simonides positively and defends him against a misconception by Polemarchus. Irwin argues that the definition offered later by Socrates (τὸ τὰ αὑτοῦ πράττειν καὶ μὴ πολυπραγμονεῖν δικαιοσύνη ἐστί, 433a) 'recalls the Simonidean view still more clearly'. Irwin also argues that, even in Book 7, the position of Simonides is endorsed by the attitude of the philosophers who return to the city what they owe to it: 'The whole moral basis of the organization of the ideal city vindicates the Simonidean view'. Even more extreme, on the verge of paradoxology, seems

- 978-90-04-44399-0

of the three versions can resist the initial problem of both Polemarchus and Cephalus: their belief that justice can be defined in terms of individual action.[55] By demonstrating the shortcomings of this initial conception in its various versions, Socrates elucidates a basic feature of justice – namely, that it is *primarily* a trait of persons, not of acts. It is clear that any further discussion depends on the understanding that justice is a property of one's character and inner constitution. Conceiving of justice in this way is fundamental for the demonstration of justice both in the individual and in the city.

During the course of Socrates' discussion with Polemarchus, Thrasymachus interjects (336b) and accuses Socrates of babbling and of talking nonsense, but ultimately yields to submitting two accounts of justice that have been perceived as attempts at defining it:

Θ1 φημὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ εἶναι τὸ δίκαιον οὐκ ἄλλο τι ἢ τὸ τοῦ κρείττονος συμφέρον (338c).
I say justice is nothing other than what is advantageous for the stronger.

Θ2 ἡ μὲν δικαιοσύνη καὶ τὸ δίκαιον ἀλλότριον ἀγαθὸν τῷ ὄντι, τοῦ κρείττονός τε καὶ ἄρχοντος συμφέρον, οἰκεία δὲ τοῦ πειθομένου τε καὶ ὑπηρετοῦντος βλάβη (343c).
Justice is really the good of another, what is advantageous for the stronger and the ruler, and harmful to the one who obeys and serves.

The wide array of discussions, inquiries and divergent interpretations resulting from these two Thrasymachean accounts is well-known – especially concerning the question of whether both accounts are (or can be made) compatible with each other.[56] It is true that, if seen as formal definitions and examined by formal criteria, these accounts prove incompatible. If justice is (in the case of Θ1) the interest of the stronger, then this justice is, for him, his own good, and not (as Θ2 insists) a foreign one. In reality, however, Thrasymachus does not formulate his positions as, nor does he claim that they are, formal definitions; the formal analyses to which they have been subjected transcend his own intentions as well as the character of the discussion. What Thrasymachus assumes is very similar to what, many centuries later, will be presented in

the position presented by Strauss (1964) 73, who insists that Socrates will later adopt the position of Polemarchus as a version of 'absolute communism'!

55 This has already been shown by Joseph (1966) 10–11.

56 Kerferd's interpretation (1947) remains the classic argument in support of the compatibility of both accounts. But see also the counter-interpretation offered by Maguire (1971).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Marxian terms as the 'critique of ideology': law does not embody a supreme, socially neutral regulatory principle or value, but rather serves concrete, tangible social interests established by existing political regimes; we are therefore expected, firstly, to diagnose this partial and biased social function of law and, secondly, to shape our own stance against it on the basis of our own social status and class position.

The impression of a contradiction between Θ1 and Θ2 has been created by a (mostly tacit) correlation between the Thrasymachean accounts and the position stated by Callicles in *Gorgias*. Thrasymachus, however, is not a supporter of a natural law of the mighty; he emphasises, on the contrary, that there is no other law than the one established in a city – and in that sense he remains a consistent positivist.[57] Above all, Thrasymachus does not speak as a representative of the powerful, but in the name of the weak.[58] Even when he praises the tyrant, he does so from the point of view of those remaining disadvantaged. The position Θ1 is expressed from their point of view, and if we approach it from this perspective, then Θ1 coincides with Θ2.[59] This is, in any case, the self-understanding of Thrasymachus himself, when he later (344c) paratactically quotes both definitions, thus showing that his position is one and unique: ὅπερ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἔλεγον, τὸ μὲν τοῦ κρείττονος συμφέρον τὸ δίκαιον τυγχάνει ὄν, τὸ δ' ἄδικον ἑαυτῷ λυσιτελοῦν τε καὶ συμφέρον (344c). ('As I said from the beginning, justice is what is advantageous for the stronger, while injustice is profitable and advantageous for oneself'). The ultimate intention of both Thrasymachean accounts finally becomes clear: he wants to argue that justice has no value,

57 Callicles, on the other hand, would never share a version of legal positivism: for him, real justice serves the powerful, but the law safeguards the interests of the weaker. For Thrasymachus, on the other hand, we do not find any trace of a theoretical distinction between νόμῳ and φύσει; he rather emphasises the practical-political aspect (with the tyrant functioning as a paradigm and model). The analysis offered by Annas (1981) 66–67 remains very useful for a first juxtaposition of Thrasymachus and Callicles.

58 The political views of Thrasymachus are therefore clearly democratic. He is probably the person who holds the view closest to what Plato considered to be democratic in the whole of the Platonic corpus.

59 This has already been stressed by Kerferd (1947) 553 and Cross and Woozley (1964) 41. Although Annas (1981) 46 will ultimately share the position of a compatibility between both positions, she somewhat complicates things by claiming that Θ1 is initially formulated only from the point of view of the strong, before Thrasymachus' position is generalised as Θ2, which is his true stance. Irwin (1995) 378 also maintains that there is no incompatibility, pointing out that both statements illustrate justice as an obedience of the weaker which favours and benefits the existing regime; Thrasymachus nowhere evaluates acts of the regime as just or unjust! Irwin even argues (not without justification) that Θ1 will be endorsed by Socrates in the course of dialogue, where 'the justice of the ideal city can be seen to benefit the regime' (1995) 377–378.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

and being just is self-destructive, while injustice generates happiness. Socrates stresses the significance of this position: πολὺ δέ μοι δοκεῖ μεῖζον εἶναι ὃ νῦν λέγει Θρασύμαχος, τὸν τοῦ ἀδίκου βίον φάσκων εἶναι κρείττω ἢ τὸν τοῦ δικαίου (347e). ('What Thrasymachus is now saying – that the life of an unjust person is better than that of a just one – seems to be of far greater importance'). In fact, the whole *Republic* is a discussion of Thrasymachus' position, with the aim of defeating it and showing that it is justice (and not injustice) that generates happiness.

The positions of Thrasymachus, their criticism by Socrates, and their final refutation[60] have been extensively discussed in the research over the past decades, but a crucial exchange between the two antagonists at the beginning of their conversation has gone rather unnoticed. What I have in mind is the point at which Thrasymachus concludes his aggressive intervention in the dialogue with the following demand:

> [...] εἰπὲ τί φῄς εἶναι τὸ δίκαιον. καὶ ὅπως μοι μὴ ἐρεῖς ὅτι τὸ δέον ἐστὶν μηδ' ὅτι τὸ ὠφέλιμον μηδ' ὅτι τὸ λυσιτελοῦν μηδ' ὅτι τὸ κερδαλέον μηδ' ὅτι τὸ συμφέρον, ἀλλὰ σαφῶς μοι καὶ ἀκριβῶς λέγε ὅτι ἂν λέγῃς· ὡς ἐγὼ οὐκ ἀποδέξομαι ἐὰν ὕθλους τοιούτους λέγῃς (336c-d).
> [...] tell us what you say the just is; and don't tell me it is the right, the beneficial, the profitable, the gainful, or the advantageous, but tell me clearly and exactly what you mean. For I won't accept such nonsense from you.

Of course, as we have already seen, Thrasymachus will later use one of these terms – the 'advantageous' (συμφέρον) – in order to express his own view of justice. But the Socratic response to this challenge is even more important. The Thrasymachean prohibition on deploying these notions when defining justice would be equivalent to a prohibition on explaining the number twelve by means of relations such as 2X6, 3X4, etc. (337b). It is obvious, therefore, that Socrates sees as positive all those versions that Thrasymachus tried to forbid by calling them 'nonsense'. Socrates insists on the right to make use of these terms if 'it seems right to him' (337c). Indeed, in the course of the dialogue, justice will be partially illustrated on the basis of all these characteristics: not only as matter of an obliging Ought (δέον), but (much more) in terms of an interest which is expressed through a multitude of synonymous terms: ὠφέλιμον,

60 This occurs through three Socratic arguments at 348c-354a, which, unfortunately, there is not the space to discuss in the present context.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

λυσιτελοῦν, κερδαλέον, συμφέρον.[61] This is the point at which the main questions of the dialogue are first articulated: *Is justice beneficial*? *Is the just person also happy*?

Through the course of Book 1 the aggressiveness of Thrasymachus is limited – and with it his active participation in the conversation. His distancing forces Socrates to wonder if Thrasymachus still says what he thinks (349a). Thrasymachus answers in the following way: 'Τί δέ σοι, ἔφη, τοῦτο διαφέρει, εἴτε μοι δοκεῖ εἴτε μή, ἀλλ' οὐ τὸν λόγον ἐλέγχεις; (349a)' (What difference does it make to you, whether I believe it or not? Why don't you refute the argument itself?). This declaration might sound 'Socratic'. But Socrates has been trapped in his tactic of *ad hominem* refutation, which Thrasymachus now follows with sarcasm and irony: ἐγὼ δέ σοι, ὥσπερ ταῖς γραυσὶν ταῖς τοὺς μύθους λεγούσαις, «εἶεν» ἐρῶ καὶ κατανεύσομαι καὶ ἀνανεύσομαι (350e). ('I shall say to you – as one does to old women telling stories – "all right", and nod or shake my head'). There is no surprise, then, that the conversation concludes with a damning self-criticism from Socrates: From his greediness, he has been 'snatching' (354b) at various issues, topics and questions, without posing the most basic and fundamental one. Before discussing the possible contribution of justice to happiness, he says, they must define what justice is. A new start to the conversation is necessary.

6 First Part

Socrates attempts to make this new beginning in Book 2, within the context of a fundamental and complete change of setting. Thrasymachus is replaced as interlocutor by the brothers of Plato, Glaucon and Adeimantus, who both assume the role of an *advocatus diaboli*, and who offer a *laudatio* in favour of injustice. This forces Socrates to attempt a complete and definitive refutation of the floating suspicion that 'the life of the unjust person is, they say, much better than that of the just one'.[62] The two brothers appear here to fully and explicitly adopt the views of Thrasymachus and the mistrust that he expresses in the advantages of choosing the just life.[63] Glaucon formulates three arguments in favour of the benefits of injustice (358a-362c), while Adeimantus, in a

61 For an analysis of the terms ἀγαθόν, ὠφέλιμον, συμφέρον, χρήσιμον in the framework of the *Republic*, see the excellent study by Stemmer (1988) 542–545.

62 πολὺ γὰρ ἀμείνων ἄρα ὁ τοῦ ἀδίκου ἢ ὁ τοῦ δικαίου βίος, ὡς λέγουσιν (358c).

63 See 358b: 'I will renew the argument of Thrasymachus' (ἐπανανεώσομαι τὸν Θρασυμάχου λόγον).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

rather supportive role, points out how volatile the prayers usually addressed to the righteous are (362d-367e). The arguments put forward by the two brothers are framed by two passages containing conceptual and methodological clarifications of great importance. These passages determine the character, progress, content and outcome of the whole dialogue. In what follows I shall focus solely on these two passages.

The first passage is part of Glaucon's initial intervention: Before presenting his arguments, he makes a significant conceptual analysis of goods (ἀγαθά), by distinguishing them into three kinds (357b-d):[64]

A1 things we seek as good for their *own* sake;

A2 things we pursue as a good both for their own sake *and* for the sake of their results (τῶν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ γιγνομένων);

A3 things that are unpleasant, but which we pursue as a good *only* for the sake of their consequences (ὅσα γίγνεται).

If, then, justice is a good, in which category does it belong? While most people would include it in A3, Glaucon does not ask Socrates to show it as belonging to A1 but to A2;[65] i.e. he asks him to show that we seek justice not only because it is a good thing in itself, but also because of its pleasant or beneficial consequences. Socrates accepts this challenge, and dedicates a small but essential part of the discussion in Book 9 to it.[66]

While the conceptual distinction between three types of goods will clarify the purpose of the dialogue and the exact formulation of its intention, the methodological proposal made by Socrates at 368c-369b will determine how this intention is to be pursued. The passage I have in mind is the famous Simile of the Letters. Just as for someone who tries to read small letters from a distance it would be a great help to previously see the same letters in a larger version, so for our effort to identify justice in the individual it would be a great help to previously capture justice in something larger – namely, the city. The debate about the *polis* is thus introduced as an ἕρμαιον, a fortune-finding, a 'godsend' heuristic inspiration for dealing with the question of justice in the soul:

64 It is characteristic that Glaucon indicates these kinds by using the term εἶδος ἀγαθοῦ, which clearly alludes to the Forms.

65 Williams' contention (1997) 58 that Socrates and Glaucon classify justice in the first category of goods remains incomprehensible to me.

66 See 612b: 'So, Glaucon, isn't it now at least unobjectionable, in addition, also to give back to justice and the rest of the virtue both the kind and quantity of wages they bring to the soul, both from human beings and from gods, both during life and after death?' (νῦν ἤδη ἀνεπίφθονόν ἐστιν πρὸς ἐκείνοις καὶ τοὺς μισθοὺς τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ τῇ ἄλλῃ ἀρετῇ ἀποδοῦναι παρ' ἀνθρώπων τε καὶ θεῶν, ζῶντός τε ἔτι τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ ἐπειδὰν τελευτήσῃ;).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

> Τὸ ζήτημα ᾧ ἐπιχειροῦμεν οὐ φαῦλον ἀλλ' ὀξὺ βλέποντος, ὡς ἐμοὶ φαίνεται. ἐπειδὴ οὖν ἡμεῖς οὐ δεινοί, δοκεῖ μοι, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, τοιαύτην ποιήσασθαι ζήτησιν αὐτοῦ, οἵανπερ ἂν εἰ προσέταξέ τις γράμματα σμικρὰ πόρρωθεν ἀναγνῶναι μὴ πάνυ ὀξὺ βλέπουσιν, ἔπειτά τις ἐνενόησεν ὅτι τὰ αὐτὰ γράμματα ἔστι που καὶ ἄλλοθι μείζω τε καὶ ἐν μείζονι, ἕρμαιον ἂν ἐφάνη, οἶμαι, ἐκεῖνα πρῶτον ἀναγνόντας οὕτως ἐπισκοπεῖν τὰ ἐλάττω, εἰ τὰ αὐτὰ ὄντα τυγχάνει (368c-d).
> The investigation we are undertaking is not an easy one, in my view, but requires keen eyesight. So, since we are not clever people, I think we should adopt the method of investigation that we use if, lacking keen eyesight, we were told to identify small letters from a distance, and then noticed that the same letters existed elsewhere in a larger size and on a larger surface. We would consider it a godsend, I think, to be allowed to identify the larger ones first, and then to examine the smaller ones to see whether they are really the same.

Two points deserve our attention here. Firstly, the identity relation between the two pairs (small-big letters, justice in the individual-in the city) is not given or even guaranteed in advance, but needs to be confirmed through the implementation of the methodological plan elaborated here. More specifically, with regard to the letters, after reading the large ones, we will return to the small ones in order to inspect 'whether they are really the same'.[67] For this assessment, there is no external authority available; as Socrates had earlier pointed out, *logos* is here alone, and it is expected to make the decision, being at the same time judge of and party to the dispute.[68] We therefore undertake the procedure indicated in the Simile on the grounds of a mere hope that the design of a large object will allow us to see better the small one, which of course remains our major topic.[69] The fact that we use the same word, δικαιοσύνη, for both individuals and cities[70] is only a weak indication of the reliability of our enterprise, unless this common use is founded upon the things themselves.

67 It is worth mentioning here the interesting interpretation proposed by White (1979) 83: we are expected to look at large and small letters simultaneously; looking at the large ones initiates a hypothesis that the small ones might be the same, and so we can easily recognise them.

68 See 348b: 'we ourselves can be both jury and advocates at once' (αὐτοί τε δικασταὶ καὶ ῥήτορες ἐσόμεθα).

69 See 369a-b: 'we could expect to find what we are looking for more easily' (ἐλπὶς εὐπετέστερον ἰδεῖν ὃ ζητοῦμεν).

70 See 368e: 'we say that there is a justice that belongs to a single man, and also one that belongs to a whole city' (δικαιοσύνη, φαμέν, ἔστι μὲν ἀνδρὸς ἑνός, ἔστι δέ που καὶ ὅλης πόλεως). The probably most comprehensive and thorough analysis of 'The City-Soul Analogy' has been offered by Blössner (2007).

But what if the project fails? What if it turns out to be a false assumption that justice in the city is basically the same thing as justice in the soul and that recognising the former will help us to recognise the latter? This question is answered in Book 4; having established that justice in the city is 'doing one's own work' (οἰκειοπραγία, 434c), i.e. the fulfilling by each class in the city of the function specific to them, and before shifting to the question of justice in the individual, Socrates notes: ὃ οὖν ἡμῖν ἐκεῖ ἐφάνη, ἐπαναφέρωμεν εἰς τὸν ἕνα, κἂν μὲν ὁμολογῆται, καλῶς ἕξει· ἐὰν δέ τι ἄλλο ἐν τῷ ἑνὶ ἐμφαίνηται, πάλιν ἐπανιόντες ἐπὶ τὴν πόλιν βασανιοῦμεν (434e-435a; 'Let's apply what has come to light for us there to the individual, and if it is confirmed, all will be well. But if something different is found in the case of the individual, we will go back to the city and test it there'). The examination of justice in the city is, therefore, *at first* not only instrumental but also of a preliminary character. Grasping the nature of justice in the soul is not only the main target, but also, as it turns out, the measure and criterion of the debate about the city.

The importance of the Simile of the Letters for the structure and the progression of the conversation cannot be exaggerated. Its introduction at 368c-369b links and unifies all individual strands and sources of the conversation so far in a single research programme. In this sense, the analogy established in the Simile functions as the transition from the extensive, somehow chaotic introductory discussion of the topic of justice to its methodical, systematic inquiry. Or, in other words, the first Book sets the topic of the dialogue, while the beginning of Book 2 sets the method to be followed; the Simile concludes the *Republic*'s prelude (in the broad sense of the word: 327a-369b) and leads into its main body.

7 Preludes of a Whole

Through the course of the present study, we have seen the various ways in which the multiple candidates vying for the title of prelude to the *Republic* belong to the text as integral constituent parts of it and contribute to its understanding as a whole. In the first sentence, we saw Socrates introducing the motif of descent into the space of the Political, and in the first scene the tension generated by this descent. In the first Book, we saw the emergence of the question of justice and its relation to happiness, which is always regarded as the first, self-evident answer to the question of how to live. In the second Book, we considered the conceptual clarification of that question (through the distinction between the three types of goods) and the way in which its answer unfolds through the course of the dialogue (based on the

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Simile of the Letters). These multiple options for the preamble, in fact, give rise to multiple perspectives from which to view and interpret the whole dialogue – a multiplicity that can be recognised as intentional on the part of Plato.

An initial result of the foregoing discussion is that the methodological approaches highlighted at the beginning, given voice by Burnyeat and Ebert, cannot claim any real validity. The particular elements of the preludes cannot be understood exclusively by themselves, nor are they mere images of the text that follows. What we have seen, on the contrary, is that the proems contain, first, a series of *motifs* (e.g. the descent), which will be expanded and *enriched* through the course of the dialogue. Secondly, the preludes offer a series of questionings or conceptual clarifications, which prove to be decisive for *shaping and developing the topic of the whole dialogue*. Both of these elements point to an interpretative strategy which, in my eyes, is the only strategy that can adequately analyse the complexities inherent in the structure of the *Republic*: the *circular reading*. Proems anticipate and pre-shape the discussion that follows; at the same time, this discussion entails further possibilities in which the preludes, and their function within the dialogue, be properly understood. Thus, in order to approach a Platonic dialogue as a whole, one must start from the prelude, advance to the whole and then return back to the prelude, which is a constituent part of that whole.

By way of conclusion, let us highlight just two of the outcomes that flow from an analysis of the *Republic* that is based on circular hermeneutics. The *first* result concerns the old, well-known question of the status of Book 1 and its inclusion in the *Republic*, which was posed at the beginning of the present text, and which has remained just under the surface throughout.[71] The view that Book 1 was originally an autonomous early dialogue has often been based on linguistic and stylistic arguments, but with few convincing results. The conclusion that has been drawn from many years of stylometric analysis is that Book 1 was written earlier than the other Books, but we are not in a position to assess how much earlier.[72] Of course, it is not surprising that a project as extensive and complicated as the *Republic* would have occupied its author over many years (or even decades), with some of its parts (such as Book 1) written earlier than others; but this is by no means a decisive argument in favour of the initial autonomy of this Book.

71 See above, Section 2 and n. 24.

72 Cf. Kahn (1993) 132–134. In his synopsis of a long discussion, Kahn accepts that there is indeed a difference between Book 1 and those that follow, but this only means that Book 1 was written before the rest, and that it is what we read in the text itself: a 'proem' (131).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

The only substantial argument in favour of the autonomy of Book 1 is still based on the idea that Book 1 is elenctic, and, thus, shares an essential characteristic with the early dialogues, while Books 2–10 (similar to the dialogues of the middle period) are constructive.[73] This position presupposes, however, a clear distinction between elenctic and constructive dialogues, which is far from obvious in the Platonic context. Does *elenchus* have no positive impact? And is the constructive intention somehow dogmatic, or does it (as a dialogic procedure) always contain elements of critical inspection?[74] It is certainly true that, in Book 1, Socrates proceeds differently than he does in the subsequent Books: He lays more importance on refuting foreign positions (sometimes their letter rather than their spirit) than in developing his own. And also Plato himself proceeds differently, when, for example, in Book 1 he places particular emphasis on the dramatic background and the context of the debate, which is then almost forgotten in the following Books.[75] But why not suppose that the pairing of these different styles was part of a well-designed, integrated and multi-faceted Platonic tactic? We must also be clear about what exactly is presupposed in the thesis of an autonomy of Book 1. According to this view, Plato included in his *Republic* the older, already published, dialogue *Thrasymachus* because of some authorial constraint, or because he was unable to write a better preface!

Several studies over the past decades, including those of Kahn (1993), Aune (1997) and Blondell (2000 and 2002), have shown that the similarity of Book 1 with the early dialogues is intended. These scholars contend that Book 1 is an organic, integral part of a thoroughly planned and organised structure, and that it contains a barraging introduction and formulation of theoretical issues that will be thoroughly discussed in the subsequent Books.[76] Even the

73 Cf. the main points of Vlastos' argument: '[Book] I is clearly elenctic' (1991) 249; 'a separate dialogue, written in Plato's earliest period, and then used, at a later time, as the introductory book of the *Republic*' (250); Vlastos sees the passage at 353c as 'an added confession that elenctic results are insecure' (251).

74 One of the most accurate and conclusive descriptions of the interweaving between the elenctic and the constructive aspects has been offered by Szlezák (1985) 282–283. His conclusion is that 'Book I was planned from the outset as a preliminary stage of the main discussion' (1985) 284.

75 It is characteristic that, while Socrates conveys, in detail, the circumstances that led to the opening of the discussion, he does not devote a single sentence to the description of how it was concluded, to the reactions after its ending, to his own further activities (return to Athens?), etc.

76 Kahn (1993) 136–139 presents a detailed and comprehensive account of twelve passages in Book 1 in which questions are raised, so that they may be discussed in the subsequent Books. The conclusion he draws is that the main issues of the dialogue have been carefully prepared and integrated into the first Book, which contains 'massive anticipation

- 978-90-04-44399-0

self-subversive way in which Socrates describes the impasse that the discussion has reached, at the end of Book 1, as the result of his own 'gluttony'[77] is a crucial aspect of the dramatic plot and the philosophical evolution of the dialogue. Ultimately, the topic of the entire dialogue has been set out in Book 1 by Thrasymachus.[78] Had Plato written a dialogue under the title *Thrasymachus*, this should have been the whole *Republic*.

Precisely because the proem, especially in the *Republic*, is an organic and integral part of the whole, it defines, at the same time, the content, the central theme and the evolution of this whole, providing the unifying thread that runs through the various topics, debates and arguments. This is the *second* result of the circular hermeneutics proposed above. It is only on account of the prelude (in its broad sense, as discussed in Section 6), that the central topic of the dialogue can be identified and understood as the question of justice in the soul. Of course, the debate on political justice and on the political constitutions takes up much of the text and is obviously reflected in its title. We cannot, however, bypass the way in which the issue of political justice is introduced in the context of the Simile of the Letters. This simile clearly shows that justice in the city is a preliminary issue, it is *a medium or a heuristic tool*, which will help us to answer the initial, basic and crucial question about justice in the soul.

The emphasis we have put on the Simile of the Letters will probably give rise to the following objection: is it reasonable and persuasive to deny the

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of the following books' and is constructed by means of a meticulous 'technique of proleptic composition'; Kahn (1993) 136. Aune (1997) 300–302 points out, in particular, that Books 2–10 develop and establish a theory of justice concisely introduced in 1. The five specific points of this interconnection are: the analogy of individual and city; the character of justice as inner balance; the emergence of the other virtues as parts of justice; the recognition of the need to show that justice is superior to injustice (also) because it is more beneficial; and the consideration that the subsequent Books attempt to provide a metaphysical foundation for several other views expressed in 1. Blondell, for her part, identifies, in the transition from the first to the second Book, a triple transformation: in the philosophical method, in the dramatic style and in the attitude of the interlocutors (2000) 130; for a more extensive exposition of this position, cf. *ead.* (2002) 165–250. Blondell sees in these transitions a Platonic intention to exercise a subtle criticism of both the Socratic elenctic (in a way, though, which does not discredit Socrates; see [2002] 194) and of his own literary practice until then; see (2000) 139. This interpretation largely coincides with that of Sesonske, who long ago (1966) 46, argued that in Book 2 Plato abandons the Socratic method and develops his own alternative. Irrespective of the problems that this interpretation may entail (e.g., Sesonske does not specify the precise content of this 'alternative' at all), it is sufficient for my present purposes to note that both he and Blondell see Book 1 as an organic, essential part of the *Republic*.

77 'I seem to have behaved *like those gluttons*' (ὥσπερ οἱ λίχνοι, 354b).

78 See 347e and Section 5 above; cf. also Kersting (1999) 35 and Wedgwood (2017) *passim*.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

distinctive impact of the political discussion, and especially the proposal of the ideal city? Indeed, the conversation about the city seems to stand on its own as an autonomous debate and to be much larger than what one would expect from a preliminary question. This, however, does not make this discussion an end in itself; politics is not the central issue of the Platonic *Republic*. It is precisely this impression that Plato finally attempts to dismantle, when he has Socrates emphasise that his political plan is not realistic, nor does it have any genuine chance of implementation. The expectations and claims that can be made in the design of the ideal city are constrained by Socrates himself, when he likens it (472e) to the production of a painter. An object of this sort, as we know, is in an inferior position in the ontological hierarchy. Moreover, just as artists are not expected to be able to prove that something they have painted really exists, so Socrates also maintains that it is not 'any less satisfactory if we cannot demonstrate that it is possible to found a city that is the same as the one we described in speech' (472e); the city remains a 'model in the heavens' (ἐν οὐρανῷ παράδειγμα, 592b). Certainly, the ideal state is initially introduced as something that appears difficult to realise, though not impossible (471c, 473c). The possibility of its accomplishment, however, is related to the hypothetical construction of the philosopher-king (473c-d), which in my view is not meant to denote a realistic version of practical application, but to indicate the impossibility of this accomplishment. The possibility that power can be vested in the philosophers appears to be only a matter of fortune[79] and is undermined by Socrates himself, when he (with obvious irony) mentions the possibility of a philosopher 'doing so now in some barbaric place far beyond our ken'.[80]

If the seizing of power by philosophers was a realistic option, then the dialogue could be said to have a primarily political character and aim, but the fact that this option is characterised as unrealistic entrenches the dialogue firmly in its initial field – namely, philosophy. Since the philosophers are (fortunately?) not in the position to assume power, they are invited – indirectly, but quite clearly – to return to their own, familiar sphere. The design of the ideal city has a *descriptive* rather than a normative character and function. Despite the extensive discussion of the city in the text, its role is clearly identified in the prelude. The Simile of the Letters presents the examination of the just city as a device that will allow us to explore our basic topic: justice in the soul. The examination of individual justice, again, is not an end in itself but stands in direct and continuous relation to the question of happiness. Do we have

79 See 493a: 'divine providence' (θεοῦ μοῖραν); 499b: 'by some divine inspiration' (ἔκ τινος θείας ἐπιπνοίας); 502a: 'happen by chance' (τύχοιεν); 592a: 'divine luck' (θεία τύχη).

80 ἢ καὶ νῦν ἔστιν ἔν τινι βαρβαρικῷ τόπῳ, πόρρω που ἐκτὸς ὄντι τῆς ἡμετέρας ἐπόψεως (499c-d).

sufficient reason to be just, to prefer justice over injustice? Does justice contribute to our happiness? If so, how?[81]

I do not know whether Strauss was right in the view that the *Republic* offers the ultimate cure for every political ambition;[82] I believe, however, that the *Republic* is not a work of applied political philosophy, and that if Plato ever had an applied political philosophy, it should be sought elsewhere (primarily in the *Laws*). The aim of the *Republic* is not the construction of a political program (albeit utopian) or of an ideal political organisation. Its topic, as clearly shown in the proem, is justice in the soul as the harmonisation of our internal contradictions in a way that allows us to achieve the highest good – individual happiness.

81 See also the exhaustive presentation and analysis of the relevant passages by Stemmer (1988) 535–549.

82 See Strauss (1964) 65.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

CHAPTER 8

Eros from Plato to Comedy

The Lysis *and the Early Reception of Plato's Beginnings*

Andrea Capra

Whether* or not there exists such a thing as a Platonic 'theory of love',[1] 'Plato's erotic dialogues' is a fairly common expression, one that is based on a number of features shared by some of his works.[2] These features may be summarised as follows:

1. 'Erotic dialogues' have Socrates claim he knows things erotic.
2. 'Erotic dialogues' feature a number of characters described as lover or beloved.
3. 'Erotic dialogues' explore the nature of human desire.

On this account, three dialogues, namely the *Lysis*, the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, stand out as clearly erotic in character.[3] These dialogues share other additional traits, which are likely to depend on the shared erotic subject: first, they tend to be intricate and in many ways contradictory, something that can be put down to the ambivalence of (Platonic) *eros*;[4] second,

* Warm thanks to Ben Acosta-Hughes, Marta Antola, Giulia Bernardini, Lucia Floridi and David Sedley for their help and suggestions.

1 I am of course referring to L. Robin's celebrated 'théorie platonicienne de l'amour' (1908). In Halperin's words (1989) 28, 'Plato is the first person on record in the history of the West to formulate a theory of erotic desire'.

2 'Love' is a notoriously misleading rendition of Greek *eros*, which is closer to English 'desire' than 'love'. See e.g. Halperin (1985).

3 For Socrates' 'erotic' expertise cf. *Phdr*. 257a; *Symp*. 212b; *Lys*. 204b. Lovers and beloveds abound in all three dialogues and include Socrates' interlocutors, historical figures and fictional characters. Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* and Socrates' two speeches in the *Phaedrus* are different, if often converging, attempts at explaining the nature of desire, and the same is true, perhaps less obviously, for the search for the πρῶτον φίλον in the *Lysis*; in the words of D. Konstan (2000) 167, 'the theme of the dialogue … is desire as such, which subtends all forms of love'. *Alcibiades* I, too, is sometimes considered to be an erotic dialogue: see e.g. Belfiore (2012). Even discounting the problem of its authenticity, however, this dialogue – it seems to me – lacks many of the relevant features (only feature 2 is clearly represented).

4 Halperin (1992) convincingly interprets the *Symposium* and its narrative structure in terms of what he calls 'the erotics of narrativity'. However, he detects a deep ambiguity in the *Symposium* insofar as 'Plato would seem to have used the *Symposium*'s dialogic opening to dramatize both the defeat and the excessive triumph of the erotic Doctrine officially

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and related, they are all heavily indebted to the poetic tradition. The *Symposium* plays with it in all possible ways, and even foreshadows the birth of a new genre, to be identified with Plato's own dialogues, resulting from a mixture of comedy and tragedy.[5] The first part of the *Phaedrus* is conceptualised as a poetic 'ode' followed by a 'palinode' delivered by an unusually inspired Socrates, and when mythology yields to dialectics, we are confronted with the cicada myth, which is reminiscent of scenes of poetic initiation.[6] The *Lysis*, too, heavily draws on the poetic tradition, as we shall see. In terms of both content and poetry (or poetics), these dialogues should be regarded as even more closely interconnected. Their proximity, I maintain, is reflected in their reception as early as the fourth century B.C.: Alexis' *Phaedrus* toys with Plato's homonymous dialogue, while at the same time borrowing from the *Symposium*. More importantly for the present book, I shall argue that the play toys with the opening of the *Lysis*. Despite its unflattering reception in later times, the *Lysis* arguably experienced glory days between the late-classical and the Hellenistic age in terms of performance, iconography and literary allusion. Accordingly, I aim to sketch an early chapter in the history of the literary reception of Plato's openings and even to suggest that we should perhaps rethink the early 'canon' of Platonic dialogues with an emphasis on *eros*.

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sanctioned by the dialogue' (114). In my view, the ambiguity is there, but I would not say, as Halperin does, that Plato turns out to be a deconstructionist *avant la lettre*. Rather, I think that a mixture of success and failure is part of Plato's depiction of Socrates, as Socrates makes very clear when he presents himself as a half-successful midwife in the *Theaetetus* (cf. 150d-151a).

5 Cf. e.g. Gaiser (1984) 55–76. The *Symposium* singles out Socrates as the best speaker of the company, who easily prevails over such poets and orators as Agathon, Aristophanes, Pausanias and Phaedrus. Consequently, Socrates' words and Plato's works are implicitly presented as a superior form of poetry, incorporating and superseding all previous genres. Cf. e.g. Bacon (1959); Clay (2000) 64; Belfiore (2011) 172. See Capra (2014) 178–179 for more detailed references (and n. 10 below on Eryximachus' speech).

6 In this context, it is worth mentioning also Socrates' concluding prayer to Pan. The 'gold' he prays for, namely 'the one but the temperate man should be able to bear and carry' is arguably the gift of poetry. See Capra (2014), Ch. 4. The opening words of the prayer, ὦ φίλε Πάν, are meant to recall Socrates' words at the beginning of the dialogue, ὦ φίλε Φαῖδρε: cf. Clay (1979). Hermias Alex., *ad loc.*, makes a similar point. Even more importantly, they call to mind Socrates' prayer to *Eros* at the end of the palinode, i.e. halfway through the *Phaedrus* (ὦ φίλε Ἔρως, 257b). Socrates' prayer(s), then, must be of some importance for the structure of the *Phaedrus* as a whole, thus paralleling the way in which the final, 'poetic' argument of the *Symposium* refers back to the dialogue's deep engagement with poetry.

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1 Poetry in the *Lysis*

Socrates' first interlocutor in the *Lysis*, namely Hippothales, is a committed poet and singer. As it turns out, Hippothales is courting a boy, whom he tries to win over by performing love poems of his own making. Everything about Hippothales conjures up the idea of an old-fashioned and vaguely pathetic aristocrat. Socrates asks him the name of his beloved, to which Hippothales blushes in embarrassment. This is how Ctesippus, a harsh character, makes fun of him:

> «Ἀστεῖόν γε» ἦ δ' ὅς «ὅτι ἐρυθριᾷς ὦ Ἱππόθαλες καὶ ὀκνεῖς εἰπεῖν Σωκράτει τοὔνομα· ἐὰν δ' οὗτος καὶ σμικρὸν χρόνον συνδιατρίψῃ σοι, παραταθήσεται ὑπὸ σοῦ ἀκούων θαμὰ λέγοντος. ἡμῶν γοῦν ὦ Σώκρατες ἐκκεκώφωκε τὰ ὦτα καὶ ἐμπέπληκε Λύσιδος· ἂν μὲν δὴ καὶ ὑποπίῃ, εὐμαρία ἡμῖν ἐστιν καὶ ἐξ ὕπνου ἐγρομένοις Λύσιδος οἴεσθαι τοὔνομα ἀκούειν». *καὶ ἃ μὲν καταλογάδην διηγεῖται*, δεινὰ ὄντα, οὐ πάνυ τι δεινά ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ἐπειδὰν *τὰ ποιήματα ἡμῶν ἐπιχειρήσῃ καταντλεῖν καὶ συγγράμματα*. καὶ ὅ ἐστιν τούτων δεινότερον, ὅτι καὶ *ᾄδει εἰς τὰ παιδικὰ φωνῇ θαυμασίᾳ*, ἣν ἡμᾶς δεῖ ἀκούοντας ἀνέχεσθαι. νῦν δὲ ἐρωτώμενος ὑπὸ σοῦ ἐρυθριᾷ (204c-d).

> [Ctesippus said]: So very charming of you to blush, Hippothales, and to be coy about telling Socrates the name! But if he passes even a little time with you, he'll be worn out by your saying it over and over again. At any rate, Socrates, he's deafened *our* ears by stuffing them with 'Lysis'; and then again if he has a bit of a drink, there's every chance we'll wake up in the middle of the night too, thinking we're hearing 'lysis'. And as terrible as the things are that he says in ordinary conversation, they are hardly terrible at all compared with the poems that he tries to pour over our heads, and the bits of prose. And what's more terrible than these is that he even *sings* to his beloved, in an extraordinary voice that *we* have to put up with listening to. Now you ask him the name, and he blushes! (trans. Penner and Rowe, slightly modified).

Hippothales' prose and poetry are typical of aristocratic gatherings, either gymnasia or symposia.[7] They include three genres: 1. encomiastic speeches (to be

7 Cf. Tecusan (1990) 242–243: 'The young company following Ktesippos and Hippothales which interrupts Sokrates' walk towards the Lyceum in the opening scene of the *Lysis* is made up of friends who have got into the habit of daily conversation (διατριβή … ἐν λόγοις, 204a). But the occurrence of the phrase ἂν μὲν δὴ καὶ ὑποπίῃ [sc. Ἱπποθάλης] (d1) in the picture of Hippothales' boring manners (204c-e) reveals them to be a drinking group as well. It thus appears that the four-limbed eulogies in praise of Lysis – free speeches (καταλογάδην διηγεῖται, d3),

- 978-90-04-44399-0

improvised); 2. prose and poems (to be recited); and 3. lyric poetry (to be sung). Ctesippus' barbs, however, are not over. A bit further, he says the following:

> Νὴ τοὺς θεούς, ἔφη ὁ Κτήσιππος, *πάνυ γε. καὶ γάρ ἐστι καταγέλαστα*, ὦ Σώκρατες. τὸ γὰρ ἐραστὴν ὄντα καὶ διαφερόντως τῶν ἄλλων τὸν νοῦν προσέχοντα τῷ παιδὶ ἴδιον μὲν μηδὲν ἔχειν λέγειν ὃ οὐχὶ κἂν παῖς εἴποι, *πῶς οὐχὶ καταγέλαστον*; ἃ δὲ ἡ πόλις ὅλη ᾄδει περὶ Δημοκράτους καὶ Λύσιδος τοῦ πάππου τοῦ παιδὸς καὶ πάντων πέρι τῶν προγόνων, πλούτους τε καὶ ἱπποτροφίας καὶ νίκας Πυθοῖ καὶ Ἰσθμοῖ καὶ Νεμέᾳ τεθρίπποις τε καὶ κέλησι, ταῦτα ποιεῖ τε καὶ λέγει, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ἔτι τούτων *κρονικώτερα* (205b-c).

> 'Heavens above!' said Ctesippus; 'For sure I know. Because the things he says are ridiculous into the bargain, Socrates. He's a lover, with his mind fixed more than anyone else's on the boy, and yet he doesn't have anything of his own to say that even *a boy* couldn't say; isn't that ridiculous, or isn't it? But what the whole city celebrates, about Democrates, and Lysis, the boy's grandfather, and about all the boy's ancestors, things like wealth and racehorses and victories at the Pythian and Istmian and Nemean Games with the four-horse tea and the single horse and rider – *that*'s what he puts in the poems he recites, and suff that's even more antediluvian than that (trans. Penner and Rowe, slightly modified).

Ctesippus derides Hippothales' poems as something decrepit and even 'antediluvian': the relevant adjective κρονικός ('as old as Kronos') is *hapax legomenon* in classical prose – in fact it is a *comedic* word.[8]

Are we to believe that Plato's Socrates (and by extension Plato himself) endorses Ctesippus' harsh criticism? To be sure, Socrates seems to have it both ways: on the one hand, he ridicules Hippothales for his inability to talk Lysis into reciprocal love on the ground that love poems, unlike Socrates' own elenctic questioning, make boys arrogant; on the other hand, he expresses a strong interest in the content (*dianoia*), as opposed to the form, of Hippothales' poems.[9] More importantly, he ends up incorporating poetry into his

poetry (ποιήματα, d4), prose (συγγράμματα, d5) and singing (d6) – were performed at symposia. Sokrates is not a member of the group, since he is asked from the beginning to join them (204a). On the contrary, his conversation with the boys is to be taken as an example of good courtesy, set in contrast to Hippothales' sympotic fashion of wooing'.

8 See Ar. *Nub*. 401, 1019, 1070. Intriguingly, Plato is even more emphatic in that, unlike Aristophanes, he uses the adjective in the comparative degree.

9 *Lys*. 205a-b.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

own discourse by toying with precisely the three genres stigmatised by Ctesippus: at different junctures of the dialogue, Socrates poses as a connoisseur of improvised speeches, poems and proses, lyric song.[10] The culmination of this strategy comes towards the end of the dialogue, when Socrates makes a surprising retrospective reference to his conversation with the boys: ὃ δὲ τὸ πρότερον ἐλέγομεν φίλον εἶναι, ὕθλος τις ἦν, ὥσπερ ποίημα Κρόνιον συγκείμενον ('and what we were saying beforehand prove to be gibberish, like the composing of antediluvian poetry', 221d).[11]

Socrates' dialogue with the boys is conceptualised as an 'antediluvian' poem, just like Hippothales' old-fashioned compositions. By ironically referring back to Ctesippus' disparaging words Socrates, and by extension Plato, claims for Socratic dialectics, and by extension for Plato's dialogues, the status of poetry.[12] As in the *Symposium* and in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates provides a (meta)poetic closure that both appropriates and refashions previous traditions. As is often the case, Socrates' (and Plato's) attitude towards poetry and myth proves to be much more nuanced and complex than is usually assumed.[13] With all of that in mind, let us now address the very opening of the dialogue.

10 At *Lys*. 211d-e Socrates resorts to a nice example of priamel. This is strongly reminiscent of poetry, and the very items of the priamel (quails, horses, dogs …) are clearly designed to evoke an aristocratic background. A bit further, Socrates explicitly claims that poets are necessary guides for the shared research (214a) and, accordingly, he comes up with quotes from Homer and Hesiod. A few lines later, he also cites some speeches, both written and oral, composed by 'most wise men'. Finally, he claims he has listened to a talk that immediately brings to mind Eryximachus' speech in the *Symposium*. For a full discussion, see Capra (2004).

11 Translation is by Jowett, slightly modified. Κρόνιον is the text given by the most recent and thorough critical editor of the dialogue, namely Martinelli Tempesta in Trabattoni (2003). Here is the relevant apparatus: d 6 ποίημα Κρόνιον Martinelli Tempesta: ποίημα μακρόν B T W: ποίημα Κρόνῳ ci. Madvig *Adv. Crit.*, p. 406: ποίημα Κρονικῶς ci. Naber, p. 236 (recepit Robinson): ποίημα μάτην ci. Ast: ποίημα μακρὸν μάτην ci. Stallbaum (κακῶς sive φλαύρως sententiam requirere sed locum desperatum censet H. van Herwerden, pp. 120–121).

12 This is in fact one of the many Platonic passages that seem to refer indirectly to Plato's own output as a form of poetry cf., among others, Gaiser (1984).

13 Needless to say, the *Republic*'s notorious ban on poetry is responsible for many such assumptions. Yet, as Stephen Halliwell has shown, even the *Republic* is much more nuanced than many believe. Cf. e.g. Halliwell (2002), esp. Ch. 4. Capra (2017) supports Halliwell's view that the history of aesthetics has been haunted by a 'ghostly misapprehension' of the 'mirror argument' found in *Republic* 10.

2 The Opening of the *Lysis*

We know that Plato's beginnings often contain his agenda in a nutshell.[14] Francisco Gonzalez has brilliantly shown that the prologue of the *Lysis* foreshadows three important themes, namely competition, *eros* and the role of Hermes, thus providing a fundamental contribution to the understanding of the dialogue.[15] No less convincingly, Franco Trivigno has argued that the everyday setting and the mundane concerns that characterise the prologue are meant to introduce and promote 'the move in the dialogue from the ordinary to the extraordinary'.[16] My focus here, however, will rather be on the very first words of the dialogue, with a close scrutiny on their linguistic and even 'rhythmical' texture. Here is how the dialogue begins:

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ: *Ἐπορευόμην* μὲν ἐξ Ἀκαδημείας εὐθὺ Λυκείου τὴν ἔξω τείχους ὑπ' αὐτὸ τὸ τεῖχος· ἐπειδὴ δ' ἐγενόμην κατὰ τὴν πυλίδα ᾗ ἡ Πάνοπος κρήνη, ἐνταῦθα συνέτυχον Ἱπποθάλει τε τῷ Ἱερωνύμου καὶ Κτησίππῳ τῷ Παιανιεῖ καὶ ἄλλοις μετὰ τούτων νεανίσκοις ἀθρόοις συνεστῶσι. καί με προσιόντα ὁ Ἱπποθάλης ἰδών, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἔφη, ποῖ δὴ πορεύῃ καὶ πόθεν; Ἐξ Ἀκαδημείας, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, πορεύομαι εὐθὺ Λυκείου (203a-b).

SOCRATES: I was on my way from the Academy straight to the Lyceum along the road that runs outside the wall, under the wall itself; but when I'd got to the small gate where the spring of Panops is, there I chanced on Hippothales son of Hieronymus and Ctesippus of the Paeania deme and other young lads with them, all standing in a group. And when Hippothales caught sight of me coming towards them, he said 'Socrates! Where is it you're on your way to, and where from?' 'From the Academy', I said; 'I'm on my way straight to the Lyceum' (trans. Penner and Rowe)

14 See, e.g., Clay (1992) and Burnyeat (1997), who, however, focus on the very *first words* of a given dialogue. Lebeck (1972) 280–284, has some good points to make about the links connecting the prologue of the *Phaedrus* to the rest of the dialogue.

15 Gonzalez (2003).

16 Trivigno (2011) 73. Extraordinary transformation also informs the reading by Gonzalez (2000).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

At first sight, Hippothales' words have nothing special: 'Where do you come from? Where are you going?' Yet things look different once we discard the introductory ἔφη. What we are left with is the very first cue of the reported dialogue:

> ὦ Σώκρατες ποῖ δὴ πορεύῃ καὶ πόθεν;
> Where from and where to are you walking, Socrates?

Hippothales' cue consists in a complete, if not especially harmonious, iambic trimeter, of a type found in comedy only.[17] While iambic trimeters are close enough to everyday conversation, Hippothales' first cue amounts to a self-contained line, something that can hardly be a coincidence.[18] Even before we learn about his 'poetic' courting of Lysis, then, Hippothales' very first words characterise him as a compulsive poet, and a bad one at that, as Ctesippus will soon point out with scorn.

How does Socrates react to Hippothales' poetic beginning? Here is Socrates' first cue in the dialogue:

> Ἐξ Ἀκαδημείας … πορεύομαι εὐθὺ Λυκείου.
> I'm walking right from Academy … And heading straight to Lycaeum.

Apparently, these words merely rephrase the very beginning of the *Lysis* itself: Ἐπορευόμην μὲν ἐξ Ἀκαδημείας εὐθὺ Λυκείου. As such, the rephrasing implicitly emphasises the altered signifier as opposed to the unchanged meaning, and with good reason: on close listening, the revised *ordo verborum* results in two hexametric hemistichs. Intriguingly, the first hemistich, ἐξ Ἀκαδημείας, is very closely paralleled in no fewer than three epigrams,[19] and the intermission provided by ἦν δ᾽ ἐγὼ ('said I') creates the acoustic illusion of a complete

17 The line features no solutions and is thus easily recognisable. However, it violates Porson's bridge. Such violations are frequent in comic trimeters, and the very structure of the line is closely paralleled e.g. by Ar. *Eccl.* 363 (τίς ἂν οὖν ἰατρόν μοι μετέλθοι καὶ τίνα). Cf. e.g. Martinelli (1995) 98 and *passim*.

18 As Aristotle noted, everyday conversation can easily 'turn iambic' (cf. *Poet.* 1449a24 ff. and *Rh.* 1408b33 ff.). Statistically, however, metrical sequences of more than ten syllables can hardly be coincidental as Dover (1995) 22 has shown. Of course, it can happen that a speaker utters a verse inadvertently. However, it is out of the question that Plato could compose and write down a verse without realising it, all the more so because the verse coincides with the opening cue of the dialogue. The verse is there because Plato wanted it to be there.

19 Posidipp. 89.3 (Austin-Bastianini): *τοὒξ Ἀκαδημείας* πρῶτ[ον σ]τόμα τὸν δέ που ἤδη; *A.P.* 8.144.3 ('Anacreon'): *οὐδ᾽ Ἀκαδήμειαν* πολυγάθεα, τῆς ἐν Ἀγοστῷ; Theocritus Chius 1.4 Page: *ἀντ᾽ Ἀκαδημείας* Βορβόρου ἐν προχοαῖς.

hexameter. Plato's Socrates, who openly toys with incorrectly scanning hexameters in the *Phaedrus*,[20] is really composing poetry of a kind, to be directly contrasted with that of Hippothales. This suggests that the uneconomically repeated information about Socrates' journey is not a lapse from stylistic elegance, as might appear, but the subtle introduction of a prose-verse juxtaposition.[21] The beginning of the *Lysis*, then, encapsulates and foreshadows two crucial motives of the dialogue, namely the comparison between competing forms of discourse and Socrates' eventual appropriation of poetry.

Inspiration is an important feature of Platonic *eros*. On approaching the vision of the beautiful, the soul – says Diotima – produces beautiful *logoi*, an idea that is preceded by an unexpected praise of good poetry, with an explicit mention of Homer and Hesiod.[22] The same is true in the *Phaedrus*: Socrates' spirited speeches owe much to the inspiration of erotic poets such as Sappho and Anacreon, as the philosopher openly recognises, and the description of the *hyperouranian* is said to surpass all existing poetry.[23] As the lover gains access to glimpses of the hyperouranian world, moreover, he acquires the mimetic ability to 'fashion and persuade' the soul of the beloved.[24] This is no doubt a reference to the noblest form of education, which is surely enacted through *logoi*, and it is again through a new – if 'antediluvian' – 'poem' that Socrates lectures poor Hippothales, who is poet *qua* lover. All of this easily accounts for the poetic quality of Plato's erotic dialogues and, more importantly, for the stunning opening of the *Lysis*.

3 Plato's Poetic Catnip and Alexis' *Phaedrus*

Pseudo-Demetrius' *On style* quotes the beginning of the *Euthydemus* and claims that 'this sort of style in imitation of reality suits an actor rather than written letters' (226 Marini).[25] Moreover, both Plutarch and Athenaeus provide evidence for the recitation of Plato's dialogues during symposia – the latter cites the beginning of the *Timaeus* as an example.[26] It may be the case that Plato's beginnings were perceived as especially 'performative' and memorable, and the *Lysis* is surely a remarkable example. With the *Lysis* in mind, I would

20 Cf. *Phdr*. 241d and especially 252b.
21 I owe this last suggestion to David Sedley (private email).
22 *Symp.* 209c-e.
23 *Phdr*. 235e and 247c.
24 *Phdr.* 253b.
25 ἡ γὰρ τοιαύτη πᾶσα ἑρμηνεία καὶ μίμησις ὑποκριτῇ πρέποι μᾶλλον, οὐ γραφομέναις ἐπιστολαῖς.
26 Plut. *Mor*. 711b-c; Ath. 9.381f-382b. Cf. Charalabopoulos (2012) 105–128.

like to move on to a 'Platonic' beginning composed by someone other than Plato himself. I am referring to the *Phaedrus* by the comic playwright Alexis:

> *Πορευομένῳ* δ' *ἐκ* Πειραιῶς ὑπὸ τῶν *κακῶν*
> *καὶ* τῆς *ἀπορίας* φιλοσοφεῖν ἐπῆλθέ μοι. (247.1-2 K.-A.)
> As I was coming out of the Piraeus, out of misery
> and out of *aporia* it occurred to me to philosophise.

This is the beginning of an extended monologue, quite possibly an *entrance* monologue, if not the very beginning of the play.[27] In what follows, Phaedrus, who may or (less likely) may not be the same character we find in Plato,[28] launches into a monologue on the nature of *Eros*, which he is unable to define clearly.[29] The monologue smacks of Plato: in the words of T.B.L. Webster, 'the subject, the definition by opposites, the hunt for the name, and the fact that the play is called *Phaedrus* all suggest that Alexis is thinking of Plato and in particular of the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*'.[30] A recent critic, Matthew

27 Cf. Arnott (1996) 693 and the concluding note of the *PCG* apparatus (*initium fabulae fuisse susp. Spengel*). According to Lasserre (1946) 114 'la citation est probablement tirée du prologue de la pièce'. The most recent and quite possibly most detailed discussion is found in Stama (2016) 445–449.

28 See Arnott (1996) 692–694.

29 καί μοι δοκοῦσιν ἀγνοεῖν οἱ ζωγράφοι | τὸν Ἔρωτα, συντομώτατον δ' εἰπεῖν, ὅσοι | τοῦ δαίμονος τούτου ποιοῦσιν εἰκόνας. | ἔστιν γὰρ οὔτε θῆλυς οὔτ' ἄρσην, πάλιν | οὔτε θεὸς οὔτ' ἄνθρωπος, οὔτ' ἀβέλτερος | οὔτ' αὖθις ἔμφρων, ἀλλὰ συνενηνεγμένος | πανταχόθεν ἑνὶ τύπῳ ⟨τε⟩ πόλλ' εἴδη φέρων. | ἡ τόλμα μὲν γὰρ ἀνδρός, ἡ ⟨δὲ⟩ δειλία | γυναικός, ἡ δ' ἄνοια μανίας, ὁ δὲ λόγος | φρονοῦντος, ἡ σφοδρότης δὲ θηρός, ὁ δὲ πόνος | ἀδάμαντος, ἡ φιλοτιμία δὲ δαίμονος. | καὶ ταῦτ' ἐγώ, μὰ τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν καὶ θεούς, | οὐκ οἶδ' ὅ τι ἐστίν, ἀλλ' ὅμως ἔχει γέ τι | τοιοῦτον, ἐγγύς τ' εἰμὶ τοὐνόματος (3–16; 'And it seems to me that, to speak quite concisely, the painters who paint pictures of Eros don't know him. For he is neither female nor male, and again neither god nor man, neither foolish nor clever, but collected from everywhere, bearing many forms in a single shape. For he has the daring of a man, the cowardice of a woman, the insanity of a madman, the logic of an intelligent man, the vehemence of a beast, the endurance of adamant, the ambition of a daemon. By Athena and the gods, for all that I still don't know what he is, but nevertheless he has at least some such quality, and I'm near his name', trans. Farmer).

30 Webster (1970) 55. Even Arnott (1996), who is in general clearly on the sceptical end of the critical spectrum and tends to posit a shared set of *topoi* for both Plato and comedy, admits that Alexis was willing to 'season at least one speech with philosophic tags reminiscent of Plato's *Phdr*. and *Symp*.' (694). As for the 'ostensible Platonic allusions' in our fragment, he mentions the following (692): 'Here an unidentified speaker … characterises [Eros] as an amalgam of (a) qualities that do not fit into conventional files of opposites (vv.6–9), (b) qualities that normally typify different beings, moods and states (10–13). Spengel first noted that two striking oppositions in (a) … also occur in Diotima's speech at Pl. *Symp*. 203d-e … These may be supplemented … with other links … between fr. and

Farmer, goes even further, and argues that 'nearly everything Alexis' character says about *Eros* has its source somewhere in the *Symposium*'.[31] As Farmer notes, 'Plato is one of the most frequently named individuals in the surviving remains of fourth-century comedy'.[32] Such a prominent position, as Farmer readily admits, may of course depend on the nature of our evidence, but it seems fair to say that comic playwrights assumed the audience had some familiarity with Plato and his dialogues, and Farmer goes so far as to claim that 'Plato appears in fourth-century comedy not merely as a stereotypical philosopher or celebrity intellectual, but as a fellow author'.[33] This claim might strike some readers as a bit too bold in the light of the evidence discussed by Farmer, yet the *Lysis*, I submit, can prove decisive in assessing the question.

Intriguingly, Alexis' first word is πορευομένῳ followed by the preposition ἐκ ('from'). The very same verb, again in the imperfective aspect and followed by the same preposition, opens the *Lysis*, and rapidly turns into a catchword: both Hippothales (πορεύῃ) and Socrates (πορεύομαι) repeat it in their opening 'verses', thus echoing the dialogue's very first word. Hippothales' line, one may suspect, sounds funny due to the repetition of the sound 'po' (ποῖ δὴ πορεύῃ καὶ πόθεν), and the suspicion becomes almost a certainty a moment later, when we hear Socrates say that Hippothales is 'far gone in his love' (πόρρω ἤδη εἶ πορευόμενος τοῦ ἔρωτος).[34] However that may be, the verb acquires here a metaphorical meaning, which foreshadows the notion of *aporia* and philosophical wandering as found throughout the dialogue.[35] This points to the aporetic conclusion of both Alexis' fragment and Plato's dialogue: possibly a young and miserable lover,[36] Alexis' Phaedrus joins Socrates in punning on the verb right

dialogue: Πορευομένῳ δ' ἐκ Πειραιῶς v. 1, ἀνιὼν Φαληρόθεν 172a; φιλοσοφεῖν v. 2, Ἔρωτα φιλόσοφον εἶναι 204b (Diotima); Eros as a δαίμων v. 5, 202d, cf. 203a (Diotima); E. neither female nor male v. 6, 189c-e (Aristophanes; cf. Gil [1970]); E. an amalgam vv. 8–9, 202a ff. (Socrates); E.'s boldness and vehemence vv. 10, 12, 203d (Diotima), cf. 196c-d (Agathon); E.'s rationality vv. 11f., 203d (Diotima); E.'s φιλοτιμία 13, 178d (Phaedrus, cf. Olivieri) …'; Olivieri (1939). The mention of the Piraeus could also recall the famous beginning of the *Republic*, as suggested by Canfora (2014) 78–82, who also provides strong arguments in favour of the identification of Alexis' character with Plato's character in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* in the context of a characteristically political reading of Alexis' parody.

31 Farmer (2017) 30.

32 Farmer (2017) 33.

33 Farmer (2017) 36.

34 *Lys*. 204b.

35 References to the path of research: *Lys*. 213e-214a, 217a, 219b, 219c; *aporia*: 206a, 216c (and cf. 223b).

36 Coppola (1923) 58, quoted with approval by Gil (1970) 338, calls him 'l'eroe di un amore romantico'.

at the beginning (πορευομένῳ – ἀπορίας) and ends up saying that he still does not know what love is about (οὐκ οἶδ' ὅ τι ἐστίν); similarly, Socrates concludes the *Lysis* by saying that, despite their friendship, he and the boys are still unable to discover what a friend is (οὔπω δὲ ὅτι ἔστιν ὁ φίλος οἷοί τε ἐγενόμεθα ἐξευρεῖν). This circumstance makes Socrates and his friends 'ridiculous' (καταγέλαστοι), something that seems to refer back, once again, to Hippothales' ridiculous poems and situation (καταγέλαστα and καταγέλαστον) while at the same time providing a solid basis for the laughter of comedy proper.[37]

Alexis borrows his title and (the name of his?) main character from Plato's *Phaedrus*, while for the pseudo-philosophical contents of the lover's speech he turns mostly to the *Symposium*. Both dialogues, however, are rather doctrinal in character and offer little in the way of aporetic traits: this is where the *Lysis* comes in. Alexis – it seems to me – could hardly ignore the catnip of an opening cue consisting in a comic trimeter delivered by a miserable lover: if anything, it is *this* peculiarity that could make of Plato a fellow poet in the eyes of the comic playwright. In fact, Alexis has fully grasped and captured the importance and the poetic quality of the opening scene of the *Lysis*, as well as the comic potential of a dialogue in which aporetic Socrates turns out to be no less ridiculous and 'antediluvian' than a third-rate poet and lover.[38]

4 Conclusions

Like other aporetic dialogues, and in fact to an even greater degree, the *Lysis* is among Plato's least read and established works in antiquity.[39] Surely, the partial and/or perceived overlapping with the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* in terms of (an attempt at) exploring human desire was also an obstacle to its philosophical reception. Both the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* became immensely, even obsessively popular with literati of all ages, something that, comparatively, might have reduced the appeal of this short erotic dialogue. Contemporary scholarship is also not especially fond of the *Lysis*, which has only partially benefited from the literary turn that has characterised Platonic studies in the last few decades.[40] Despite having authored a major contribution

37 *Lys*. 205c-d, quoted above.

38 A reference back to the *Lysis* could also help explain why Alexis describes love as a 'cowardly' (10–11, ἡ ⟨δὲ⟩ δειλία | γυναικός) something that has baffled scholars and led them to look for non-Platonic intertexts to complement Alexis' otherwise Platonic description. See Cavallini (2000) 155–164.

39 Cf. Bonazzi (2004).

40 Trabattoni (2004) and Penner and Rowe (2005) as notable exceptions.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

to the understanding of the text and meaning of a crucial passage,[41] such a distinguished scholar as David Sedley, who is deservedly famous for his very fine ear for both Plato's arguments and literary writing, used to say that the *Lysis* was by far the dialogue he liked the least.[42] To my surprise, he returned to the *Lysis* quite recently with an equally brilliant contribution, which argues, most convincingly, that the arrangement of the figures and buildings found in the so-called Academy mosaic closely reflects the description that opens the *Lysis*, the scene including the Academy, the Lycaeum, the spring, and the direct road taken by Socrates, now serving the purpose of showing Aristotle as he leaves the Academy only to reach and found his own school in the Lycaeum.[43] This runs counter the dialogue's otherwise limited dissemination in antiquity and surely invites a reconsideration of its reception. If my hunch is correct, Alexis offers what is arguably the earliest extant episode in the *literary* reception of the *Lysis* as well as, more generally and importantly for the present volume, of Platonic beginnings, while at the same time inaugurating the romantic trivialisation of Platonic *eros* – something that lies at the basis of much later fiction.[44] Phaedrus' outburst is 'philosophical' just as Plato's erotic beginnings are 'poetic', and he likewise ends up inquiring into the elusive nature of *eros.*

My reason for emphasising that Alexis is our first example of *literary* reception is that, in all probability, the mosaic is a replica of a painting from the late 4th century, quite possibly dating to Xenocrates' lifetime, 'in or around the decade 335–325 BCE', as Sedley plausibly suggests, one that was displayed in a

41 Sedley (1989).

42 Private email.

43 Cf. Sedley (forthcoming), with full bibliography on the artefact and its interpretation. As I write, the article has yet to appear. Warm thanks to David for making it available to me and for sharing his exciting thoughts. Here is how he describes the scene in the draft I have: 'I am convinced that the area visible in the right background is not, as has been very widely assumed, the Athenian acropolis, but the grove of the Lyceum, which thanks to a telescoping of its actual geographical distance is enabled to loom above Aristotle as his own identity icon, foreshadowing his ultimate destination as founder of a breakaway school located there … The details of Socrates' journey, down to the point where he was intercepted by Hippothales, are replicated perfectly in the mosaic. Not only has the artist depicted the path which he joined, running immediately under the city wall, but we can even make out at its far end a small gateway in the wall, facing out onto what must be the luxuriant patch of greenery around a spring – the very spot where Socrates met Hippothales. In the mosaic, then, the precise journey from the Academy towards the Lyceum formerly travelled by Plato's teacher, as immortalized in the *Lysis*, is about to be travelled again, this time symbolically, by Plato's own leading pupil, in the more sinister form of a philosophical desertion'. Intriguingly, Socrates' route is perhaps not as 'direct' as he claims, something that can be interpreted in various ways. Cf. Planeaux 2001.

44 Cf. Hunter (2012) Ch. 6.1 ('Playing with Plato').

- 978-90-04-44399-0

gymnasium and, I would imagine, in the Academy itself. An uncle of Menander, Alexis, by general consensus, was born in the seventies of the fourth century B.C., and Plutarch reports that he died at the venerable age of a hundred and six years, still an active and successful playwright.[45] He was surely familiar with Plato, whom he refers to by name in no fewer than five plays (*Ancylion*, *Imilcon*, *Meropis*, *Olympiodorus*, *Parasitus*), not to mention countless more or less likely allusions to Platonic or Academic habits, tenets and facts.[46]

With its artful combination of features taken from the *Lysis*, the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, Phaedrus' monologue looks like a mock miniature of Plato's erotic dialogues. Athenians and visitors alike, we may conclude, would have been in a position to compare the play and its Platonic beginning with a publicly displayed painting modelled after the *Lysis*. Which is earlier? Which represents the earliest episode in the reception of Platonic prologues? By and large, the context eludes us, and this is not the place for a full discussion, but it is at least worth mentioning that Benjamin Acosta-Hughes has recently argued that Callimachus' famous epigram devoted to Lysanias and Echo repeating the boy's name is in fact meant to echo the beginning of the *Lysis*, something that would take us only a few decades forward in time. It goes without saying that this intriguing suggestion squares very well with the arguments put forward by Sedley and by myself.[47] Three wholly independent

45 *Mor*. 420d and 785b. For a full and recent discussion of Alexis' life, cf. Stama (2016) 13–23.

46 Canfora (2014, 80) points out that 'Epigrammi attribuiti a Platone sorti non sappiamo quando, parlavano del suo amore per Fedro (Diogene Laerzio, III, 31 = *Anthol. Gr.* VII, 100): e questa invenzione poteva ulteriormente stuzzicare l'estro comico: mettere in scena un Fedro che farnetica sull'amore parafrasando pensieri cavati dai dialoghi, forse tra i più letti e diffusi, di Platone'.

47 Acosta-Hughes (2015) on Ep. 28 Pf. (2 G.-P.), concluding as follows: 'One might wonder here whether the final distich of Callimachus' epigram is not meant as a playful echo of the *eromenos* of Plato's *Lysis*, but also of its discourse of attachment and possession. The echo in the final line of Callimachus' epigram can then be partly understood even as one that traverses time and text(s), repeating the many echoes of the beloved's name from one text and era in another' (17, and cf. Acosta-Hughes 2016 for more possible echoes from the *Lysis* in Callimachean epigram). The Platonic connection becomes a very likely and most attractive one if Martinelli Tempesta (in Trabattoni 2003) is right in reconstructing the text of 207a as reading οὐ 'τὸ καλὸς εἶ, ναί' μόνον ἄξιος ἀκοῦσαι (i.e. Lysis is 'worthy of hearing not just 'you're beautiful, yes!') in contrast with previous editors, who print τὸ καλὸς εἶναι μόνον ἄξιος ἀκοῦσαι (i.e. Lysis is 'worthy of hearing not just that he is beautiful'). With such a reading of the manuscripts, which is in line with fifth-century 'καλός inscriptions' and which Acosta-Hughes was not aware of, Callimachus' Λυσανίη, σὺ δὲ ναίχι καλός (l. 5, 'Lysanias, you're beautiful, yes!') could indeed be construed as a rather clear echo of Plato's *Lysis*.

arguments for the hitherto unnoticed influence and dissemination of the *Lysis* and its prologue between the fourth and the third century B.C. are unlikely to be a mere coincidence. To say the least, the prologue is surely (one of) the saving grace(s) of the *Lysis*, a dialogue we might now look at, quite literally, with different eyes.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

CHAPTER 9

Eros in the Platonic Frame

Kathryn A. Morgan

Erotic desire or love, *eros*, plays an important role in many Platonic dialogues. The *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Lysis* are often called 'erotic dialogues' because of their focus on love and friendship and several other dialogues (*Charmides*, *Alcibiades* 1, *Protagoras* and others to be considered below) explicitly feature paederastic discussion and banter in their opening sequences, even though the main discussion is not focused on *eros*. Indeed, an erotic dynamic seems fundamental to Socrates' activities; his desire to pursue knowledge is a kind of *eros* and he aims to create the same desire in others.[1] No wonder he claims that the one thing he knows is erotics (*Symp*. 177d8-9). My goal here is to examine some manifestations of Athenian erotic culture in the framing portions of a number of dialogues and focus on the ambivalent status of Socrates as lover and potential seducer on the one hand and as the object of desire on the other. We shall see that Plato plays not just on the pedagogical aspects of elite Athenian paederasty but also on the social dramas that were a part of that culture: flirting, jealousy, and the threat of physical violence. In this context a further question arises: how is the reader to interpret the occasional appearance of the language of force in the framing elements of dialogues, and what implications does this have for the practice of philosophy?

Let us begin by observing that the openings of several dialogues place Socrates in Athenian gymnasia and palaestras and that he is well known among the youths that frequent these locations. Such exercise spaces were standard settings for paederastic courtship and seduction, although they were also educational spaces.[2] At the opening of the *Laches* Melesias and Lysimachus discuss with Nicias and Laches the educational program of their sons after having watched a display of a man fighting in armor. When the two fathers ask whether this is a useful skill for the boys to learn, Laches suggests that they

1 Gordon (2012) has made a case for seeing *eros* as pervasive in the corpus and in dialogues that are not traditionally considered erotic.

2 Dover (1978) 54–55; Lear and Cantarella (2008) 28–29, 37–38, 90–91; Tuozzo (2011) 103; Morgan (2012) 418–419.

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- 978-90-04-44399-0

include Socrates in the conversation. It turns out that Lysimachus is an old friend of Socrates' father, but he also remembers that his son has been talking about Socrates:

ΛΥΣΙΜΑΧΟΣ: περιφέρει δέ τίς με καὶ μνήμη ἄρτι τῶνδε λεγόντων· τὰ γὰρ μειράκια τάδε πρὸς ἀλλήλους οἴκοι διαλεγόμενοι θαμὰ ἐπιμέμνηνται Σωκράτους καὶ σφόδρα ἐπαινοῦσιν· οὐ μέντοι πώποτε αὐτοὺς ἀνηρώτησα εἰ τὸν Σωφρονίσκου λέγοιεν. ἀλλ', ὦ παῖδες, λέγετέ μοι, ὅδ' ἐστὶ Σωκράτης, περὶ οὗ ἑκάστοτε ἐμέμνησθε;

ΠΑΙΣ: Πάνυ μὲν οὖν, ὦ πάτερ, οὗτος (*Lach.* 180e-181a).

LYSIMACHUS: In fact I've just remembered these two talking about you, for when these boys are talking to each other at home they often mention Socrates and praise him enthusiastically. But I've never yet asked them if they meant the son of Sophroniscus. Well, boys, tell me, is this the Socrates whom you were mentioning on those occasions?

BOY: Absolutely, father, this is the one.[3]

The *Laches* ends with Lysimachus requesting that Socrates come to his house the next day for further consultation, although predictably Socrates' position is (as it also is in the *Charmides*) that he is no expert, and that in order to help the younger generation they first need to find teachers for themselves who can rescue them from their philosophical quandaries. Still, we learn from Nicias at the opening of the *Laches* (180d) that Socrates has recently and successfully referred him to Damon for a teacher of his son.

The *Lysis* is set in the newly-built palaestra of Miccus. Socrates is on his way to the Lyceum (where there was a gymnasium), when he is diverted by friends, who ask him to come in and talk with them. Socrates immediately asks what kind of talk and 'who is the beauty' (τίς ὁ καλός, 204a-b). The frame narrative of the *Charmides* again makes it clear that Socrates is often to be found in the palaestra. Socrates narrates how he had recently returned from the campaign at Potidaea and was visiting his accustomed haunts (ἐπὶ τὰς συνήθεις διατριβάς). 'In particular', he says, 'I entered the palaestra of Taureas' (*Chrm.* 153a). When he enters into conversation with Charmides (in a scene to which we shall return) we discover that Charmides already knows about him. Socrates tells him about a charm for his headache, and Charmides says that he will write it out at Socrates' dictation. Socrates responds:

3 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

> Πότερον, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἐάν με πείθῃς ἢ κἂν μή;
> Γελάσας οὖν, Ἐάν σε πείθω, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες.
> Εἶεν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ· καὶ τοὔνομά μου σὺ ἀκριβοῖς;
> Εἰ μὴ ἀδικῶ γε, ἔφη· οὐ γάρ τι σοῦ ὀλίγος λόγος ἐστὶν ἐν τοῖς ἡμετέροις ἡλικιώταις, μέμνημαι δὲ ἔγωγε καὶ παῖς ὢν Κριτίᾳ τῷδε συνόντα σε (*Chrm*. 156a).
>
> I said, 'Whether you persuade me or even if you don't?'
> So he laughed and said, 'If I persuade you, Socrates'.
> 'Well, then', I said, 'do you even know my name accurately?'
> 'Unless I do you a wrong', he said, 'for there's no small amount of talk about you among people of my age. But I also remember that when I was a child you were keeping company with Critias here'.

Similarly, in the *Theaetetus* Socrates starts his conversation with the mathematician Theodorus in a room in a gymnasium of some sort, where Theaetetus enters after having oiled himself on the running track outside (*Tht*. 144c). In the *Theaetetus* the question of beauty is raised only to undergo an elaborate *praeteritio*. Theodorus answers Socrates' question about promising youngsters by praising Theaetetus, but is quite informative on the complications that could arise between a beautiful pupil and his teacher. He confesses that if Theaetetus 'were beautiful, I would be afraid to speak too enthusiastically in case I should seem to anyone to desire him. But as it is—and don't get annoyed at me—he is not beautiful. He's like you in having a snub nose and protruding eyes, though he has them less than you' (143e). As the conversation with Theaetetus gets under way Theaetetus admits that he has heard about the kinds of questions Socrates asks and has been worrying about how to answer them (148e, cf. 149a).

The opening of the *Theaetetus* might profitably be seen as a kind of mirror of the opening of the *Charmides*. In both *Charmides* (153d) and *Theaetetus* (143d) Socrates asks his interlocutors in the frame conversation what boys are interesting from the point of view of philosophy, though in the *Charmides* Socrates makes his enquiries in the form of a double question about which boys excel in philosophy or beauty (or both). Both Critias and Theodorus have the perfect candidates, Charmides and Theaetetus respectively, and both are eager to have their charge answer Socrates' questions. There is a difference, however: Charmides is beautiful and Theaetetus is not. Theaetetus is astoundingly gifted from an intellectual point of view, we learn, and we know from the frame dialogue that in fact he grew up to be a distinguished citizen of Athens, and one who died for his country (142b-d). Yet he is no beauty. In

- 978-90-04-44399-0

the case of Charmides, on the other hand, we are assured by Critias that his inside matches his outside, that he has a beautiful and modest soul (*Chrm.* 154d-e, cf. 158a-b). It is part of the historical irony of that dialogue that Charmides ended up a tyrannical oligarch, so although he would have stressed, as did many oligarchs, the value of *sophrosune*, he was not as fair within as without.[4] His time with Socrates did him no good. Theaetetus is superficially similar to Socrates, although it remains to be seen in the initial stages of the dialogue whether this superficial resemblance runs deeper (*Tht.* 144d-145c).[5] Socrates is not willing to take his word for it until he has had further conversation with him.

The openings of all four dialogues considered so far feature an athletic environment, and the *Charmides*, *Theaetetus*, and *Lysis* deal explicitly with the question of erotic attraction to varying degrees. The encounter in the *Laches*, featuring as it does fathers looking for teachers for their sons, understandably lacks erotic overtones. The *Theaetetus* disclaims them, while *Charmides* and *Lysis* make prominent the issue of who is a beauty. Socrates' presence in these environments confirms his role as an expert in erotics, and his interlocutors in these dialogues are keen to have him meet the young. Both the *Laches* and *Charmides* show Socrates being appealed to as an authority by members of the elder generation (Nicias and Laches) or by the guardian of the boy in question (Critias). Critias' credentials are, of course, questionable for the reader, owing to his and Charmides' later involvement with the Thirty Tyrants. Nicias and Laches, however, were unimpeachable conservative Athenian generals, both of whom died in the service of Athens during the Peloponnesian War. In the *Laches* there is none of the erotic banter of the *Charmides*, but there is fundamentally the same dynamic: an older male or males attempt to engage Socrates as a consultant. At the same time, we find out that Socrates is already well known to their sons or wards, either in person or through reputation, and this theme is repeated in the *Theaetetus*. In the *Charmides*, Critias acts as a kind of matchmaker for his own nefarious purposes and clearly wants to manipulate Socrates through Charmides' outstanding beauty and talents, but in the *Laches* it is Socrates who is to be the intermediary, finding teachers for the boys. Similarly, in the *Theaetetus* Socrates presents himself as an intellectual matchmaker, who has sent young men on to Prodicus and others (151b; we shall return to this passage below).

4 On Charmides, oligarchy, and *sophrosune*, see Tuozzo (2011) 94. See also North (1966) 100–115.

5 On the similarities between Socrates and Theaetetus and their implications, see Blondell (2002) 260–265.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

In all of the dialogues I have been looking at, the proprieties are carefully observed. Socrates is never alone with any of the physically or intellectually beautiful youths he meets. Multiple older males are present, sometimes relatives or guardians, even when several of the company are lovers or aspire to be. Yet the potential for erotic relationships and a certain homology between erotic and intellectual relationships are constantly before us. In the *Lysis*, Socrates even undertakes to model for Hippothales, who desires Lysis, the kind of behaviour that will attract a boy to an erotic suitor (not a discourse of elaborate praise but an attitude that humbles, abases, and intrigues them, 210e). It is only Hippothales' intense shyness and diffidence that stops Socrates from making Hippothales' suitor status explicit; if he had done so he might well have been seen as taking on the role of intermediary (procurer?) between the two of them.[6] In the event, of course, Socrates' humbling of Lysis is not only exemplary for Hippothales, but starts the broader discussion within the dialogue on the nature of friendship. By the end of the dialogue (223b) Socrates can assert that he, Lysis, and Menexenus, are all *philoi*, friends, a relationship that presages future encounters.

The ending also gestures towards the protocols that governed the interaction between boys and elder males. When Socrates had reached *aporia* with the two boys on the definition of friendship, he narrates, he intended to carry on the investigation with one of the elder men present. Their supervisors (*paidagogoi*), however, 'like *daimones*' broke up the conversation and told the boys they had to go home. One might speculate that these *daimones* are an externalisation of Socrates' internal *daimon*, which always signals to him when not to do something. More important for the current argument, however, is how close the whole situation comes to degenerating into a brawl. Socrates says that:

> τὸ μὲν οὖν πρῶτον καὶ ἡμεῖς καὶ οἱ περιεστῶτες αὐτοὺς ἀπηλαύνομεν· ἐπειδὴ δὲ οὐδὲν ἐφρόντιζον ἡμῶν, ἀλλ' ὑποβαρβαρίζοντες ἠγανάκτουν τε καὶ οὐδὲν ἧττον ἐκάλουν, ἀλλ' ἐδόκουν ἡμῖν ὑποπεπωκότες ἐν τοῖς Ἑρμαίοις ἄποροι εἶναι προσφέρεσθαι, ἡττηθέντες οὖν αὐτῶν διελύσαμεν τὴν συνουσίαν (*Lys.* 223a-b).
>
> At first, we and the bystanders were driving them off, but when they took no notice of us but were complaining in their broken Greek and kept on calling them, they seemed to us difficult to deal with because they were

6 See Gordon (2012) 105–106 (with n. 44) for Socrates' matchmaking in the *Lysis*, the 'love triangle' there, and its methodological implications.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

> tipsy due to the Hermaea festival. So we confessed defeat and broke up the conversation.

In some circumstances encounters at the gymnasium between young men, their supervisors, and their admirers could lead to blows. In *Against Timarchus* (135–136), Aeschines speculates that the opposition will claim that he has been the lover of many, made a nuisance of himself in the gymnasia (ἐν τοῖς γυμνασίοις ὀχληρὸς ὢν), written erotic poetry (perhaps like Hippothales in *Lysis* 205a-206a) and gotten involved in 'insults and blows' (λοιδοριῶν τινων καὶ πληγῶν). Such incidents will not have been uncommon, and Aeschines admits that he has been involved in contentious battles (φιλονεικίας καὶ μάχας) in erotic situations; this is clearly expected from an *erastes*. Cooler heads prevail in the *Lysis*, but violence was not far away.

The threat of force also lies behind some of the erotic banter in the *Charmides*, although it will become unclear on whom the force will be applied. As we saw above, the dialogue is set in the palaestra of Taureas, where Critias invites Socrates to admire the perfections, physical and otherwise, of his ward. The potential for impropriety is registered but forestalled by Critias' presence (155a: 'even if he is still young, it would not be shameful to converse with him in your presence, since you are his guardian and his cousin'). Socrates' self-presentation reinforces his erotic persona. He admits that all young men appear beautiful to him but Charmides' particular charms almost make Socrates lose control:

> τότε δή, ὦ γεννάδα, εἶδόν τε τὰ ἐντὸς τοῦ ἱματίου καὶ ἐφλεγόμην καὶ οὐκέτ' ἐν ἐμαυτοῦ ἦν καὶ ἐνόμισα σοφώτατον εἶναι τὸν Κυδίαν τὰ ἐρωτικά, ὃς εἶπεν ἐπὶ καλοῦ λέγων παιδός, ἄλλῳ ὑποτιθέμενος, εὐλαβεῖσθαι μὴ κατέναντα λέοντος νεβρὸν ἐλθόντα μοῖραν αἱρεῖσθαι κρεῶν· αὐτὸς γάρ μοι ἐδόκουν ὑπὸ τοῦ τοιούτου θρέμματος ἑαλωκέναι (*Chrm.* 155d).
>
> Then indeed, my noble friend, I saw inside his cloak and caught on fire and was beside myself, and I thought that Cydias was the wisest when it came to erotic matters. When he was giving advice to someone else about a beautiful boy he said to take care lest a fawn coming into the presence of a lion be taken as a helping of meat. For I myself thought that I had been captured by such a beast.

We are set up, then, to see Socrates as a potential lover whose advances must be closely monitored. This would be the normal way of such things; it is why *paidagogoi* accompany young men to the palaestra. Yet Socrates complicates our interpretation of the situation when he quotes the poet Cydias, who cautions

- 978-90-04-44399-0

against allowing a fawn to come into the presence of a lion in case the fawn becomes dinner. But who is the lion? The most natural analogy might see the lover as the animal predator and the beloved as prey. When Socrates describes the relationship between lover and beloved in his first speech in the *Phaedrus* (241d), he quotes what may be a proverb. He says that the *philia* of a lover does not come from goodwill but for the sake of being filled: 'as wolves love lambs, so lovers feel affection for a boy'. Similarly, Theognis (949–950) boasts that 'like a lion trusting in its strength I caught in my claws a fawn … and did not drink its blood'. In the *Charmides*, however, the tables are turned and Socrates is the helpless fawn captured by the lion. Since we do not have the context of the original fragment of Cydias it is difficult to reconstruct the original dynamic of his advice. Dover assumes that Cydias has indeed inverted the lion-fawn relationship so that 'the susceptible adult is the fawn smitten and devoured by desire'.[7] One can easily imagine that a witty poet may have scored points by reversing a paederastic commonplace, but it is also possible that Socrates is being disingenuous here and that the original Cydias poem contained advice not to let an *eromenos* into the presence of a(nother) lover. In that case, Socrates' misreading would humorously stress the paradoxical situation that even though a youth like Charmides would normally be erotic prey, his own susceptibility to beauty has made him the victim.

This in turn raises larger questions about where the power in the dialogue resides. As might be expected, Socrates is master of the various elenctic exchanges, but the conversation as a whole is elaborately stage-managed through the machinations of Critias, who suggests to Socrates that Socrates pretend to have a cure for Charmides' headache as a way of engaging the youth in talk. When Charmides says that he will write out the charm that will cure his headache at Socrates' dictation, Socrates (in the passage referred to earlier) asks 'Whether you persuade me or even if you don't?' Charmides laughs and says, 'If I persuade you, Socrates'. This exchange charmingly continues the conceit that Socrates is at Charmides' mercy; one alternative to achieving one's goal by persuasion is to achieve it by force.[8] It also, however, establishes Socrates as possessing valuable intellectual goods which he may or may not share. Now it is Charmides who must exercise persuasion and show himself to be worthy of favor, and this puts him, paradoxically, in the position of a lover.

7 Dover (1978) 58 n. 33. Tuozzo (2011) 108–109 addresses the corruption of the text in this passage and suggests that the Cydias poem may have stressed a paralysis that comes over the fawn at the sight of the lion. This would be matched by Socrates' helplessness when confronted with the vision of Charmides.

8 Cf. Schmid (1998) 6.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

It also reinforces Socrates' interpretation of the Cydias fragment referred to above. Charmides may have external beauty, but Socrates has that quality internally. It makes him the pursued rather than the pursuer.

This role reversal will famously be repeated in the *Symposium* when Alcibiades tells of his failed seduction of Socrates. Alcibiades wants Socrates to tell him everything he knows and thinks that this can best be achieved by taking Socrates as his lover. He reports that he managed (somewhat scandalously) to meet Socrates alone without an attendant, but Socrates failed to make a move. Then he invited him to the gymnasium, again without success. Finally he invited him to dinner 'just like a lover plotting against his boyfriend' (ἀτεχνῶς ὥσπερ ἐραστὴς παιδικοῖς ἐπιβουλεύων, 217c), got him to sleep over afterwards and propositioned him explicitly, but Socrates still resisted his charms, commenting that if Alcibiades was right about his wisdom, the young man's good looks paled in comparison. Alcibiades explicitly remarks on Socrates' self-control (*sophrosunes*, 216d), the same self-control he shows when confronted with Charmides' body, and the quality that is the focus of discussion during the *Charmides*. As Schmid has observed, moderation or self-control is a quality more usually associated with a beloved than with the adult *erastes*.[9] Alcibiades also comments at the end of his speech that:

> … ὑμῖν εἶπον ἅ με ὕβρισεν. καὶ μέντοι οὐκ ἐμὲ μόνον ταῦτα πεποίηκεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ Χαρμίδην τὸν Γλαύκωνος καὶ Εὐθύδημον τὸν Διοκλέους καὶ ἄλλους πάνυ πολλούς, οὓς οὗτος ἐξαπατῶν ὡς ἐραστὴς παιδικὰ μᾶλλον αὐτὸς καθίσταται ἀντ' ἐραστοῦ (*Symp*. 222a-b).
> … I have told you how he [Socrates] insulted me. Yet he hasn't done this to me alone but also to Charmides the son of Glaucon and Euthydemus the son of Diocles and very many others: he deceives them with the pretense that he is their lover and instead sets himself up as boyfriend in place of lover.

The opening of the *Charmides* shows us this dynamic under construction,[10] and it is significant that Alcibiades places Socrates' behavior under the rubric of erotic *hybris*. *Hybris* in amatory matters could have several expressions. It could refer to erotic violence and rape, but also to behavior that resulted in humiliation and loss of honor; both Alcibiades and Charmides have been

9 Cf. Schmid (1998) 7–9.
10 Tuozzo (2011) 89.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

humiliated because Socrates first leads them on like a lover, and then looks down on them.[11]

The same reversal characterises the end of the *Charmides*, this time with a more open threat of force. Having failed to discover the nature of *sophrosune* Socrates suggests to Charmides that if Charmides really is self-controlled then he should regard Socrates as a babbler and useless for the investigation of the virtue in question. Charmides of course disagrees; he still thinks he needs Socrates' 'charm' or 'incantation' (*epodes*, 176b). Critias supports this ambition, saying that if Charmides lets himself be charmed by Socrates it will be proof of his self-control. Charmides assures him that he will do so if Critias commands it, and especially because he is his guardian. At this point Socrates intervenes:

> Οὗτοι, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, τί βουλεύεσθον ποιεῖν;
> Οὐδέν, ἔφη ὁ Χαρμίδης, ἀλλὰ βεβουλεύμεθα.
> Βιάσῃ ἄρα, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, καὶ οὐδ' ἀνάκρισίν μοι δώσεις;
> Ὡς βιασομένου, ἔφη, ἐπειδήπερ ὅδε γε ἐπιτάττει· πρὸς ταῦτα σὺ αὖ βουλεύου ὅτι ποιήσεις.
> Ἀλλ' οὐδεμία, ἔφην ἐγώ, λείπεται βουλή· σοὶ γὰρ ἐπιχειροῦντι πράττειν ὁτιοῦν καὶ βιαζομένῳ οὐδεὶς οἷός τ' ἔσται ἐναντιοῦσθαι ἀνθρώπων.
> Μὴ τοίνυν, ἦ δ' ὅς, μηδὲ σὺ ἐναντιοῦ.
> Οὐ τοίνυν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἐναντιώσομαι (176c-d).
> 'You two', I said, 'what are you plotting to do?'
> 'Nothing', said Charmides, 'we've finished plotting'.
> 'You will force me, then', I said, 'and you won't allow me a hearing?'
> 'Assume that I will force you', he said, 'since he [Critias] so instructs me. So you take thought for what you will do in this situation'.
> 'There's only one thing left to do', I said, 'for when you try to do anything whatsoever and use force, no one is able to oppose you'.
> 'Then don't you oppose me', he said.
> 'I won't oppose you', I said.

The fact that Socrates is narrating the exchange between Charmides and Critias makes it obvious that he has heard everything they have said. His question about what they are plotting is, then, nonsense. Why does he ask it? To parade his helplessness in the face of the beautiful Charmides and his crafty guardian.

11 Ludwig (2002) 117; Desmond (2005) 43–44, 54. Desmond (57) suggests that 'Socrates *hybristes* and Socrates *erastes* are different aspects of the one character'.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

If we know Socrates we know that he does not have to be forced to talk to beautiful young men, but the banter obtrusively makes a point of saying that he is forced. This is an elaborate erotic conceit, an exaggerated admission, just as in the opening, that Socrates is at the mercy of a pretty face, although of course we need no more believe it here than we need believe that Socrates was almost overcome by lust at the sight of Charmides' body. Yet thinking of Socrates as the object of force makes it clear that he is not only desiring but desirable.[12] To spend time in Socrates' company and listen to him speak, certain people are prepared to use coercion. So will it be with Phaedrus.

The *Phaedrus* spends some time creating a typology of erotic relationships, but my focus here is on the erotic role-playing that characterises the opening and closing of the dialogue and on how the language of erotic relationships is overlaid onto discursive and intellectual ones. As the dialogue opens Socrates and Phaedrus go for a walk by the Ilissus so that Socrates can hear Phaedrus recite a speech of Lysias setting forth the advantages of a young man gratifying a non-lover rather than a lover.[13] In a way, this opening recapitulates themes encountered at the beginning of the *Lysis*, as Socrates again discusses with a younger man the strategies and arguments by which one might capture an *eromenos*. In the *Phaedrus* both interlocutors are shown to be exceptionally keen on the pleasures of discourse; Phaedrus remarks that Socrates will not let him go until he has delivered the speech (ὥς μοι δοκεῖς σὺ οὐδαμῶς με ἀφήσειν, 228c) and Socrates refuses to allow Phaedrus practice on him by trying to reproduce the speech from memory when he has the text under his cloak. The verb Socrates uses for 'practice' is *eggumnazo* (ἐκκέκρουκάς με ἐλπίδος, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἣν εἶχον ἐν σοὶ ὡς **ἐγγυμνασόμενος**, 228e), a word that takes us back to the milieu of the gymnasium and overlays intellectual onto physical sparring.

After Phaedrus' recitation of Lysias' speech, Socrates criticises it as inadequate, and in response to this critique, Phaedrus is determined to extract a speech from Socrates on the same topic. Socrates tries to back away from such a performance, but to no avail. At 236b, he complains, 'Are you serious about this, Phaedrus, because I got a hold on your boyfriend (*paidika*) to tease you?' (Ἐσπούδακας, ὦ Φαῖδρε, ὅτι σου τῶν παιδικῶν ἐπελαβόμην ἐρεσχηλῶν σε;). This

12 Cf. Tuozzo (2011) 300–301, who also thinks that the threat of violence may remind us of the Thirty: Socrates complains that Critias and Charmides won't even allow him a hearing (*anakrisin*) and the Thirty were notorious for putting people to death without a trial.

13 Gordon (2012) 168 notes the repeated use of the language of 'leading on' (*proagein*) at the beginning of the dialogue as vocabulary that also belongs to the world of pimping and pandering.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

comment continues the wrestling metaphor and casts Phaedrus as the lover (*erastes*) of Lysias who rushes to his defense when he is attacked.[14] The conceit is taken up again at the close of the dialogue where Socrates tells Phaedrus to tell his companion Lysias (*hetairos*) about the relative worthlessness of written composition:

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ:	Ταῦτα τοίνυν τῷ ἑταίρῳ φράζε.
ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ:	Τί δὲ σύ; πῶς ποιήσεις; οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ τὸν σὸν ἑταῖρον δεῖ παρελθεῖν.
ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ:	Τίνα τοῦτον;
ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ:	Ἰσοκράτη τὸν (*Phdr.* 278e).
SOCRATES:	So tell these things to your companion.
PHAEDRUS:	What about you. How will you act? For we mustn't pass over *your* companion.
SOCRATES:	Who is that?
PHAEDRUS:	Isocrates the beautiful.

The use of the tag 'the fair, the beautiful' immediately puts us in the context of an erotic relationship, though it's notable that Socrates has to ask who Phaedrus means. This suggests that Phaedrus' quip is not so much commenting on a recognised erotic pairing (such as is the case with Socrates and Alcibiades) as it is extending the erotic model that was set up at the start of the dialogue. Thus in the opening Phaedrus is an admirer of Lysias' *logoi*. Socrates teases him by implying that this is an erotic attraction, that Phaedrus admires an intellectually commonplace piece of work because he is in love with Lysias. As the dialogue ends, Phaedrus closes a thematic ring-composition by projecting a similar relationship onto Socrates and Isocrates. It is a characterisation that Socrates accepts when he concludes his remarks on the nature of speech-writing and encourages Phaedrus to pass them on to Lysias: 'that's what I shall report to my boyfriend (*paidikois*) from the gods of this place, and you report my words to yours' (279b).

The erotic play in the opening of the dialogue is more extensive than this, however. As Socrates urges Phaedrus to perform Lysias' speech he characterises himself as a 'lover of speeches' (*logon erastou*), and complains:

> δεομένου δὲ λέγειν τοῦ τῶν λόγων ἐραστοῦ, ἐθρύπτετο ὡς δὴ οὐκ ἐπιθυμῶν λέγειν· τελευτῶν δὲ ἔμελλε καὶ εἰ μή τις ἑκὼν ἀκούοι βίᾳ ἐρεῖν (228c).

14 Rowe (1988) 152 ad 236b9.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

> But when the lover of speeches asked him to speak, he played coy as if he didn't want to speak. But in the end he was going to speak even if his unwilling audience would be forced to listen to him.

A little later the tables are turned. When Phaedrus takes seriously Socrates' assertion that he could create a better speech himself, and encourages him to do so, Socrates demurs. Phaedrus, however, is determined:

> ἀλλὰ διανοήθητι ὅτι ἐντεῦθεν οὐκ ἄπιμεν πρὶν ἂν σὺ εἴπῃς ἃ ἔφησθα ἐν τῷ στήθει ἔχειν. ἐσμὲν δὲ μόνω ἐν ἐρημίᾳ, ἰσχυρότερος δ' ἐγὼ καὶ νεώτερος, ἐκ δὲ ἁπάντων τούτων «σύνες ὅ τοι λέγω», καὶ μηδαμῶς πρὸς βίαν βουληθῇς μᾶλλον ἢ ἑκὼν λέγειν (236c-d).
> You must realize that we're not going away from here until you say what you said you had on your chest. We're alone in a deserted spot, and I am younger and stronger. From all this you should 'understand what I'm telling you' and should in no way want to be forced to speak rather than speak willingly.

At 228c the object of erotic affection is speeches, not a person, and this development looks forward to the later part of the dialogue where Socrates confesses himself to be a 'lover of collections and divisions' and implies that he would go in hot erotic pursuit of someone who could practice them:

> Τούτων δὴ ἔγωγε αὐτός τε ἐραστής, ὦ Φαῖδρε, τῶν διαιρέσεων καὶ συναγωγῶν, ἵνα οἷός τε ὦ λέγειν τε καὶ φρονεῖν· ἐάν τέ τιν' ἄλλον ἡγήσωμαι δυνατὸν εἰς ἓν καὶ ἐπὶ πολλὰ πεφυκόθ' ὁρᾶν, τοῦτον διώκω «κατόπισθε μετ' ἴχνιον ὥστε θεοῖο» (266b).
> I for my part, Phaedrus, am a lover of these collections and divisions, so that I can speak and think, and if I think someone else can look at things as one and as many, I pursue him, 'following behind his track like that of a god'.

This comment takes us back to their opening encounter in the dialogue, where Socrates told Phaedrus that his desire to hear Lysias' speech was so great that if necessary he would follow Phaedrus all the way to Megara (227e). Now that Socrates has taken a proper view of rhetorical efforts like those of Lysias, his *eros* for rhetorical production is replaced by *eros* for philosophical method.[15]

15 Cf. Ferrari (1987) 227–230.

Let us return to Socrates' suggestion that Phaedrus would have forced the speech on Socrates even if Socrates were not willing to listen; his feigned unwillingness to speak is coyness. Phaedrus is portrayed both as a kind of tease, and as someone who would have no hesitation in forcing his (rhetorical) attentions on someone. He plays the shy beloved but may in reality be a kind of erotic kidnapper. This is confirmed at 236c-d, cited above, as Phaedrus turns Socrates' joke back on him: they are alone in a deserted spot and Phaedrus is younger and stronger. He can force Socrates to speak, and it seems inevitable to me that we must read this as a play on the forcible imposition of erotic attention, a kind of rape. In this context it is certainly no coincidence that the wind god Boreas snatched up and carried off Oreithyia just a little downstream from where the conversation between Socrates and Phaedrus is taking place, an erotic abduction that also mirrors the rapture of the soul transported to the world of the Forms by the sight of beauty in Socrates' Great Speech.[16] Whereas the dynamics of the Boreas narrative are easily enough understood, the situation with Socrates and Phaedrus is not so simple. Is Socrates pursuing Phaedrus or is Phaedrus pursuing Socrates? As Griswold has observed, their relationship is characterised by a 'sequence of roles and role reversals tied to the thesis of the first two speeches of the dialogue'.[17] The implications of these reversals are worked through in the larger dialogue, but as we have seen, Socrates' oscillation between *erastes and eromenos* is not confined to the *Phaedrus*.

Socrates' position in the dialogue frames discussed so far is complex. He is a lover: of beautiful young men, of words, of wisdom. Yet he is also the object of desire, notorious among the young men and the recipient of their praise as well as their attention.[18] This positioning might also allow him to be seen in the eyes of some as an arrogant and hybristic seducer and intellectual procurer. For the ill-disposed, the 'corruption of the young' that Socrates was accused of at his trial could have a sexual component. The verb *diaphtheirein* could be used of sexual, as well as moral and intellectual corruption.[19] The *Theaetetus* thematises Socrates as a matchmaker, the positive counterpart of the

16 It is also possible to map Boreas onto Socrates and Oreithyia onto Phaedrus, as was done by Hermias of Alexandria (Griswold [1986] 252 n. 21): Ὠρείθυια γὰρ εἴη ἂν ψυχὴ ἐφιεμένη τῶν ἄνω … Ἔστω οὖν Ὠρείθυια καὶ ἡ τοῦ Φαίδρου ψυχή, ὁ δὲ Σωκράτης Βορρᾶς (Hermias, *In Phdr.*, Lucarini and Moreschini [2012] 31, lines 21–28).

17 Griswold (1986) 26–33, quote at 30.

18 See Lear and Cantarella (2008) 68–71 for (very) rare erotic role reversal in Attic vase painting.

19 Davidson (2007) 92, who also comments on the equation made between a philosopher and a courtesan in the anecdote concerning the Socratic Stilpo and the courtesan Glycera (Satyrus *ap.* Ath. 13.584a).

disreputable procurer. Socrates claims for himself the art of the midwife and then, to Theaetetus' surprise, asserts that midwives are the best matchmakers (*promnesteriai*, 149e). They keep quiet about this skill, he says, because they do not want to be accused of 'procuring' (*proagogia*, 150a).[20] Nevertheless he is an intellectual matchmaker, who, as we saw earlier, has connected various young men with Prodicus and other experts (151b).

It is worth pausing briefly on this famous analogy of Socrates as midwife. When Socrates presses Theaetetus for a definition of knowledge, the boy has difficulties, but his response shows that he is familiar with Socrates' reputation and that he has a philosophical temperament. Theaetetus reports that he has been conducting his own investigations in definition and has been trying to work along Socratic lines, but without success. This is the mark of a truly promising pupil, who does not wait to be sought out by Socrates (perhaps he thought he was not beautiful enough!) but starts on his own. This makes him 'pregnant' with knowledge:

ΘΕΑΙΤΗΤΟΣ: Ἀλλ' εὖ ἴσθι, ὦ Σώκρατες, πολλάκις δὴ αὐτὸ ἐπεχείρησα σκέψασθαι, ἀκούων τὰς παρὰ σοῦ ἀποφερομένας ἐρωτήσεις. ἀλλὰ γὰρ οὔτ' αὐτὸς δύναμαι πεῖσαι ἐμαυτὸν ὡς ἱκανῶς τι λέγω οὔτ' ἄλλου ἀκοῦσαι λέγοντος οὕτως ὡς σὺ διακελεύῃ, οὐ μὲν δὴ αὖ οὐδ' ἀπαλλαγῆναι τοῦ μέλειν.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ: Ὠδίνεις γάρ, ὦ φίλε Θεαίτητε, διὰ τὸ μὴ κενὸς ἀλλ' ἐγκύμων εἶναι (*Tht.* 148e).

THEAETETUS: But you should know, Socrates, that I've often tried to investigate it, when I've heard from people about the questions you ask. But I can't persuade myself that I know what I'm talking about, nor have I heard anyone speaking as you direct. But indeed I can't even stop worrying about it.

SOCRATES: That is because you are in labor, dear Theaetetus, and are not barren but pregnant.

Socrates then fashions an image of himself as a midwife of knowledge, barren himself but able to help others deliver their intellectual children and to judge

20 Gordon (2012) 131–132 notes that the 'role of midwife in ancient Greece did not, so far as medical texts of the period indicate, include matchmaking', and observes trenchantly that '[b]y mentioning procuring in this way, Socrates perfects the rhetorical strategy of *paraleipsis*, bringing to mind the very thing he expressly denies wanting to bring to mind'. She also (138) reminds us that Socrates presents himself as a pimp in Xenophon's *Symposium* 3.10.

whether or not they are to be reared. As others have observed, the use of the midwife metaphor seems to foreclose the possibility of viewing Socrates and Theaetetus as *erastes* and *eromenos*, and represents a change in the dynamics of intellectual production from the *Symposium*, where the birth of ideas results from the intellectual intercourse of a paederastic pair, but closer examination reveals that Socrates, although he claims to be 'barren' is in fact assigned a quasi-parental role.[21] Blondell remarks that several passages in the *Theaetetus* 'blur the line between Sokrates and philosophy as objects of desire, and between Sokrates and others (particularly the sophists) as both impregnators and midwives for the young'.[22] When Socrates disparages the role of the procurer, we are reminded that the practice of connecting young boys with an elder male (teacher) could have troubling implications. In spite of the midwife metaphor, then, the atmosphere of the opening of the *Theaetetus* remains perceptibly erotic, with both Theodorus and Socrates cast as potential lovers, though both disclaim the role.[23] Yet this passage does defuse somewhat the sexual tension we have seen in the other dialogues considered here. This happens first through Theodorus' blunder about external beauty. Theaetetus is not beautiful and so is not an obvious candidate to become erotic prey. After Socrates calls Theodorus' standards into question, we might have expected that a certain kind of sexual tension might return. It does not do so because Socrates moves himself explicitly out of the male-on-male sexual realm by imaging himself into the world of heterosexual generation. He is now a barren midwife, past the age of childbearing and thus not sexualised. Indeed, this is the last we see of a flirty Socrates in the corpus. No one would ever want to exchange risqué banter with the Eleatic Stranger.

There is something about Socrates that destabilizes established social, intellectual, and amatory dynamics, and this quality is showcased repeatedly. Just as in Classical Athens one would talk of Alcibiades or Charmides the 'beautiful' (*kalos*) so, I imagine, one might talk of Socrates the *sophos* (despite his claims to the contrary) – or even, as we have learned from the *Symposium*, Socrates the beautiful, given Socrates' wry comment that if Alcibiades actually thinks that Socrates has the power of making him better, then he is trying to exchange bronze for gold in trying to trade his own superficial beauty for Socrates' real beauty (*Symp.* 218e). The opening sequence of the *Protagoras* returns to precisely the same dynamic between beauty and wisdom in an erotic context.[24]

21 Blondell (2002) 271–274; Leitao (2012) 227–249.
22 Blondell (2002) 273, cf. Leitao (2012) 243, 'Plato's midwife is thus a father in disguise'.
23 See Gordon (2012) 135 on Theodorus' unsuitability as a match for Theaetetus.
24 See Gordon (2012) 68–72 for further discussion of the role of *eros* in the *Protagoras*.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Socrates and an unnamed friend meet and the friend starts the conversation with the usual erotic banter by speculating that Socrates has just come from the pursuit – or more precisely, hunt (*kunegesiou*) – of Alcibiades (309a). The metaphor of hunting was at home in a paederastic milieu,[25] but Socrates moves in an unexpected direction. Everything is going well with Alcibiades but he has in fact been captured by a new interest:

ΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ: Καὶ τί ἂν γεγονὸς εἴη περὶ σὲ κἀκεῖνον τοσοῦτον πρᾶγμα; οὐ γὰρ δήπου τινὶ καλλίονι ἐνέτυχες ἄλλῳ ἔν γε τῇδε τῇ πόλει.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ: Καὶ πολύ γε.

ΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ: Τί φῄς; ἀστῷ ἢ ξένῳ;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ: Ξένῳ.

ΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ: Ποδαπῷ;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ: Ἀβδηρίτῃ.

ΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ: Καὶ οὕτω καλός τις ὁ ξένος ἔδοξέν σοι εἶναι, ὥστε τοῦ Κλεινίου ὑέος καλλίων σοι φανῆναι;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ: Πῶς δ᾽ οὐ μέλλει, ὦ μακάριε, τὸ σοφώτατον κάλλιον φαίνεσθαι;

ΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ: Ἀλλ᾽ ἦ σοφῷ τινι ἡμῖν, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐντυχὼν πάρει;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ: Σοφωτάτῳ μὲν οὖν δήπου τῶν γε νῦν, εἴ σοι δοκεῖ σοφώτατος εἶναι Πρωταγόρας (*Prt.* 309c-d).

FRIEND: What on earth could have happened to you and him? For I don't suppose you met with anyone else more beautiful, at least in this city.

SOCRATES: Much more beautiful.

FRIEND: What are you saying? Was it a foreigner or a townsman?

SOCRATES: A foreigner.

FRIEND: Where from?

SOCRATES: Abdera.

FRIEND: And did some foreigner seem so beautiful to you that he appeared more beautiful than the son of Clinias?

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25 Dover (1978) 87–88. For the connection between hunting and paederasty in vase painting see Lear and Cantarella (2008) 72–73, 86–89 (taking issue with any simplistic equation of courtship and hunting). The metaphor occurs again in the *Lysis*, where Socrates advises Hippothales that it is a poor hunter (*thereutes*) who scares off his prey and makes it more difficult to catch (206a). Again in the *Lysis* the hunt for truth is juxtaposed with paederastic hunting. When Socrates thinks that he has discovered what a friend is, he reports that 'I rejoiced, like a hunter since I had caught what I was hunting' (ὥσπερ θηρευτής τις, ἔχων ἀγαπητῶς ὃ ἐθηρευόμην, 218c). What started as a model of competent seduction has been transformed into a philosophical project.

SOCRATES:	How could what is most wise not appear to be more beautiful?
FRIEND:	Have you come here after meeting with some wise man, Socrates?
SOCRATES:	The wisest of those now alive, I suppose—if Protagoras seems to you to be the wisest.

The hunt for beautiful boys and the hunt for wisdom are explicitly juxtaposed here and as in the *Symposium* wisdom trumps mere physical beauty (though we note that Socrates' declaration of Protagoras' wisdom is significantly hedged).

The opening of the *Protagoras* thus engages in Socrates' frequent conceit that makes erotic and intellectual attachments run in parallel. Once Socrates starts his internal narrative, however, we see that the situation is much richer than we suspected. Socrates tells how he was awakened in the early hours of dawn by a young friend Hippocrates banging on the door of his house. He rushes in in a frenzy and it turns out that the reason for his enthusiasm is that Protagoras is in town. He wants Socrates to introduce him so that Protagoras will take him as his pupil (*Prt*. 310b-311a). There are several points worth noticing here. The first is that Hippocrates' behavior is almost that of a frenzied lover: banging on the door at an unseasonable hour and shouting.[26] When he is let in he comes and sits on the end of Socrates' bed in the dark. This *topos* of banging at the door to gain entry is repeated when Socrates and Hippocrates have trouble in gaining entry to Callias' house, where Protagoras is staying, because the doorkeeper does not like the look – or rather the sound – of them (314d-e). The second is that Hippocrates, in effect, wants to consult Socrates in his persona as matchmaker; he asks Socrates to speak with Protagoras on his behalf, since he is too young to do so (310e). Socrates will fulfil this request once he and Hippocrates are in the presence of Protagoras, introducing his young friend as a potential pupil and asking the sophist to clarify his educational program (316b-318a). He implies, in addition, that if Protagoras is not the right kind of teacher they can take up the question with the other wise men who are there (314b-c).

The situation is complicated, however, because Socrates evidently does not think that Protagoras can live up to his advertisements. He first engages Hippocrates in a lengthy discussion about what he hopes to gain from the association, and then goes to some lengths to deconstruct Protagoras' professions of expertise. Whereas Socrates sets himself up at the start of the dialogue as a

26 For knocking at the door to gain entrance for erotic purposes, see Aristophanes *Ecclesiazousae* 952–977.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

lover of Protagoras' superlative beauty – superlative because he is the wisest – it turns out that it is Socrates who is able to best Protagoras in argument and is in fact the most desirable. When he tries to exit the gathering half way through the discussion Callias grabs hold of his hand with his right hand and with his left grabs Socrates' cloak and does not allow him to leave (335c-d). He also asks Socrates to stay in order to do them a favour, to gratify (*charizesthai*) them (335d-e). Socrates has stolen center stage, and when he leaves at the end of the dialogue he takes Hippocrates with him. The assignation has not gone according to Hippocrates' plan, although it is clear that this is very much what Socrates had in mind. Plato has constructed a minor intellectual love triangle between Hippocrates, Protagoras and Socrates. It is clear that young Hippocrates knows Socrates well and talks with him frequently (310b-d), but there is a danger that he may transfer his affections to Protagoras. Socrates' role as matchmaker can only go so far and when he feels that it is right he takes steps to prevent the new attachment.

My last exhibit is the opening of the *Republic*, which exhibits interesting similarities with the beginning of the *Phaedrus*, the middle of the *Protagoras*, and the close of the *Charmides.* Once again Socrates is on the move and once again admirers and potential interlocutors are determined to detain him. As Socrates starts to return to the city after a visit to the Piraeus his friend Polemarchus sees him at a distance and sends his slave to ask him to wait. The slave stops him by catching hold of his cloak, and then Polemarchus himself arrives:

> Ὁ οὖν Πολέμαρχος ἔφη· Ὦ Σώκρατες, δοκεῖτέ μοι πρὸς ἄστυ ὡρμῆσθαι ὡς ἀπιόντες.
> Οὐ γὰρ κακῶς δοξάζεις, ἦν δ' ἐγώ.
> Ὁρᾷς οὖν ἡμᾶς, ἔφη, ὅσοι ἐσμέν;
> Πῶς γὰρ οὔ;
> Ἢ τοίνυν τούτων, ἔφη, κρείττους γένεσθε ἢ μένετ' αὐτοῦ.
> Οὐκοῦν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἔτι ἓν λείπεται, τὸ ἢν πείσωμεν ὑμᾶς ὡς χρὴ ἡμᾶς ἀφεῖναι;
> Ἦ καὶ δύναισθ' ἄν, ἦ δ' ὅς, πεῖσαι μὴ ἀκούοντας;
> Οὐδαμῶς, ἔφη ὁ Γλαύκων.
> Ὡς τοίνυν μὴ ἀκουσομένων, οὕτω διανοεῖσθε (*Resp*. 327c).
> So Polemarchus said,
> 'Socrates, you seem to me to be setting out to go back to the city'.
> 'That's not a bad guess', I said.
> 'Do you see', he said, 'how many we are?'
> 'Of course'.
> 'So then', he said, 'either be stronger than them, or stay here'.

> 'Isn't it the case', I said, 'that one option is left, if we persuade you that you should let us go?'
> 'Could you persuade us', he said, 'if we don't listen?'
> 'No way!' said Glaucon.
> 'So think of us as refusing to listen'.

This episode, as Polemarchus induces Socrates to accompany him to the house of Cephalus is of course charming, showcasing the eagerness of Socrates' friends for his company and conversation. It is also emblematic of Socratic dialectic as a whole; it only works if people are willing to listen and be persuaded. What we need to linger on, however, is the threat of force.[27] Socrates is the object of discursive desire, which expresses itself in a potential for physically overpowering him. The reader is reminded of Phaedrus' mock threats to Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, that he is younger and stronger, of the moment in the middle of the *Protagoras* where Callias catches hold of Socrates' cloak, and of Charmides' intimations of force at the end of the *Charmides*. There is also a philosophical aspect to the notion of compulsion. Myles Burnyeat, in his famous lecture 'First Words', suggested that we may compare Socrates detained reluctantly in the Piraeus to the philosopher kings of the *Republic* forced to spend part of their lives administering the city rather than contemplating the Good.[28] People see, with a greater or lesser degree of clarity, that they need and even desire Socrates. Socrates as an object of others' desire and the desire to find wisdom and truth are closely intertwined in the action of the *Republic*.

Now, it is evident that none of these threats of force are meant literally but are part of general and erotic banter. Yet they gain their resonance and humour because they are set against a context in which erotic kidnapping and physical violence did occur. We have already looked at Aeschines' confession that he has been involved in fights and trouble at the gymnasium because of his erotic attachments, events that he expects his audience to accept as nothing out of the ordinary. Another illuminating source is Lysias' speech *Against Simon*, in which the speaker narrates how he and Simon (and friends) came to blows over the attentions of a young boy from Plataea, who may have been a slave or

27 Rosen (1965) 455–458 also remarks on the 'shadow of constraint' at the beginning of the *Republic* connecting it with the violence that he suggests must be used to found the just city, and pointing out also that the detention of Socrates is paralleled at the beginning of the *Symposium* when Apollodorus is detained for conversation.

28 Burnyeat (1997) 5–7 = (2012a) 310–312; cf. *Resp.* 519c-520a: ἀναγκάσαι … μὴ ἐπιτρέπειν … προσαναγκάζοντες. Cf. also Rosen (1965) 459.

a slave prostitute (although this is never made explicit in the speech).[29] The speaker tells how Simon and his friends broke down the doors of his house and entered to search for the boy. At a later point they ambushed him and the boy in the Piraeus and tried to carry the boy off, but the boy escaped because his abductors were holding him by his cloak and he threw it off (*Lys.* 3.6, 11–12). We can be sure that no citizen youth would have been carried away by force or physically overpowered; this is why members of Socrates' circle can joke about the possibility, and the humour is compounded because of the role-reversal discussed above, where Socrates plays the part of the *eromenos.* James Davidson is thus right to insist that 'relationships between master and slave clearly belong to quite a different world from that of traditional Athenian Homosexuality' and to say that '[t]raditional Greek homosexuality centered on the gymnasium … seems to have continued as before right through the fourth century'.[30] He uses Plato's dialogues as evidence for the continuation of this traditional mode. We can see, however, that the separation between these two worlds was far from absolute. The one was always aware of the other, and the existence of a world of constraint and unrestrained passion is an important subtext for the Platonic dialogues I have been considering here, not to mention the frequent appearance of the issue of intemperate desire elsewhere in the Platonic corpus.

When Kenneth Dover assessed the use of erotic vocabulary in Plato's works, he remarked that:

> We may well feel that 'erastes' is so freely used in the Socratic circle that the boundary between the serious and the playful or between the literal and the figurative is overrun. This is possible if, and only if, it is very well understood within that circle that eros is not a desire for bodily contact but a love of moral and intellectual excellence.[31]

He is quite correct to speak of the boundary between serious and playful, literal and metaphorical being overrun. The Platonic dialogue is a kind of serious play, and in the *Laws* (803b) the Athenian Stranger reminds us that 'the affairs of humans are not worth of much seriousness'.[32] Vertiginous moves from the concrete to the abstract are very much par for the Platonic course. It may,

29 Carey (1989) 87.
30 Davidson (2007) 450, 458.
31 Dover (1978) 157; cf. Ludwig (2002) 151–152, who suggests that 'erotic rhetoric… was reaching its full flower in the written word of Socratics such as Isocrates, Plato, and Xenophon'.
32 Morgan (2000) 173–178.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

however, be too simple to conclude that such confounding of boundaries is possible only because bodily contact has been ruled out within the Socratic circle. This might well have been true for Socrates and his advanced students, but as we have seen, Socrates' circle does not consist only of committed philosophers. It includes aspiring politicians and intellectuals of all sorts. *Eros* is, as Paul Ludwig has suggested, a traditional mode in which various motives are experienced in the classical polis.[33] Yet what is distinctive about its role in Plato is the way figurative uses threaten to lose their figurative quality. Bodily and philosophical *eros* exist as two ends of a continuum, and the characters of the dialogues all exist at various places on it.

Exploring the interaction of physical and intellectual *eros* is a way of signaling that the entire social self is at stake in Socratic interaction. Even as he goes about his own erotic business, Socrates is a player in a larger world, where people of all sorts want to use him for their own ends, only some of which are philosophical. He is pursuer and pursued, *erastes* and *eromenos*, educational consultant and matchmaker, and intellectual facilitator; the openings of the dialogues considered in this chapter show this dynamic repeatedly. The light touch with which Plato executes these vignettes reflects the urbanity of the elite milieu and its forms of flirtation; philosophy finds a congenial home in such an environment. The downside of the world of the Athenian elite was arrogance, ambition, and *hybris*, and this is reflected in the various threats of force we have encountered. Erotic role-playing and flirtation keep the tone light in situations where pride and self-esteem are on the line. They allow Socrates and his interlocutors to experiment with their identities and differing levels of commitment to their intellectual enterprise, as well as explore power dynamics.[34] They enable people to tell or imply uncomfortable truths in jest. They show people 'flirting' with philosophy.

In his great speech in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates suggests that of all the Forms, beauty holds a special place in the mortal world (250d). It is the only Form that we can perceive with our senses, with sight, and this is why the sight of beauty transports us. He goes on to say that *phronesis* is not seen with our eyes, but it would generate terrible passion (*deinous erotas*), if some clear image of it impinged upon our sight. Socrates feels this passion for wisdom and he also generates it. This is why he is more beautiful than Alcibiades or Charmides and

33 Ludwig (2002) 16.

34 In the case of Critias, the compulsion in which he plots (together with Charmides) to ensnare Socrates will be repeated in real life when the Thirty attempt to implicate Socrates in the judicial murder of Leon of Salamis (*Ap.* 32c-d).

why he inspires such a passionate following. He exists as a mediating figure between our mundane reality and the world of truth, and like Eros in the *Symposium* (as many have noted) looks in both directions, loving and beloved. This is another reason why so many openings of Platonic dialogues evoke an erotic context. It is essential for the reader to be reminded that desire is the context for philosophical inquiry and to understand that even as Socrates exists within and participates in one of the defining elite cultural institutions of his day, he is transforming it from the inside out.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

CHAPTER 10

'Were You There Yourself?'

The 'Dialectics of the Body' In Plato's Phaedo

Zacharoula Petraki

1 Introduction

Plato's *Phaedo* belongs to a small group of dialogues which present Socrates' conversations embedded in narrative frames of more or less remarkable complexity. In contrast to the other narrated dialogues of the corpus, however, the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, the *Parmenides* and the *Theaetetus* are narrated not by Socrates but by his friends and followers.[1] In all four dialogues, Plato experiments with the argumentation of highly complex philosophical ideas.[2] But why would he choose to entrust the narration of difficult arguments to dramatic characters of questionable philosophical competence and whose problematic memory could possibly jeopardise the historicity of the account? Why deny the narrator's role to Socrates, whom we might think of as philosophically more trustworthy?[3]

In what follows, I examine the significance of the dramatic frame of the *Phaedo* in Plato's representation of Socrates in this work. I argue that in the *Phaedo* we witness the *transformation*, as it were, of the physical body of Socrates into philosophic *logos*, which transcends him as an embodied human and simultaneously makes him an exceptional dramatic persona.[4] On this interpretation, Plato makes the persona of Socrates in the *Phaedo* function 'dialectically'. A 'dialectic' reading of the representation of the Socratic body

1 By 'narrative frames' I refer to the discussion among Socrates' friends which takes place in the dialogues' dramatic *hic et nunc*. The frame, then, presents in an embedded narratological form a recollected dialogue of Socrates. See Giannopoulou (2017) Ch. 1. On Socrates as the narrator of his own conversations see Schultz (2013) 1–17.

2 These are: the philosophical significance attributed to *Eros* in the *Symposium*, the theory of knowledge in the *Theaetetus*, and the criticism of the Forms in the *Parmenides*.

3 Several works have shed light on the question of the complex narrative frames. See Brumbaugh (1961) 26–32; Klein (1965) 1–31; Hyland (1968); Clay (1992); Halperin (1992) 93–130; Sedley (1995) 3–26; Johnson (1998); Hunter (2004) 20–29.

4 Burger (1984) 10–12 *et passim* also sees a 'transformation' in the Platonic text but of the *pragmata/onta* into *logoi* (see *Phd.* 99d4-100a8).

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- 978-90-04-44399-0

would indicate that Socrates dramatises in the *Phaedo* a *quasi*-philosophical ascent from the somatic to the intellectual, as is asserted in *Phd.* 66b, where Socrates claims that the true philosophers (οἱ γνησίως φιλοσοφοῦντες) spend their lives trying to dissociate themselves as far as possible from their body.[5] This exchange of the physical body for *philosophical logos* stems from Plato's association of Socrates with his ontic reality and, as I argue, is closely entwined with the dialogue's narratological form. The narrative frame introduces an indirectness that allows us to view Socrates from up close, *as well as from afar*, and from the many and diverse angles of his interlocutors and close friends.[6] Hence, the reader does not witness Socrates at work 'directly', as is the case in the dramatic dialogues, but learns instead how those who have met Socrates *in the flesh* experienced the rapport with this extraordinary man.[7] In having, however, a less complex narrative frame compared to the *Symposium* or the *Theaetetus*, the *Phaedo* limits the diversity of the refractions of the Socratic body to the lens of a single narrator, Phaedo, who was present at Socrates' last conversation with his friends in the Athenian prison.

The reflections of Socrates that we see through the eyes of Phaedo give us a window into one's potentially successful *independence* from the dying philosopher. Phaedo's description of the interlocutors' relation to the *body* of Socrates, in particular, symbolises and re-enacts the complex doings of philosophy in the sensible world: although the interlocutors should treat Socrates as a 'step' or a 'channel' to the world of the intellect, they do not 'mix' with ontic reality (to use two common Platonic similes), but 'touch' and 'embrace' (ἅπτονται and ἐφάπτονται) Socrates, thus failing to break free from the alluring spell of physicality and the sensible world.[8]

In this regard, the question that opens the dialogue, 'were you there yourself?' (αὐτὸς παρεγένου, *Phd.* 57a),[9] is not philosophically innocent, a mere urgent request for an autopsy that confirms the narrator's truthfulness and knowledgeability. The short question, with its overt emphasis on the narrator's physical proximity to Socrates, introduces the theme of *physical* contact

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5 One could well argue that this assent is comparable to the *scala amoris* of the *Symposium.* Yet this hypothesis requires further argumentation.

6 See Blondell (2007) 175–179.

7 On the Socratic friends present in the Athens prison see Nails (2002); Casertano (2015) 13–28.

8 For the simile see *Symp*. 212a2-5: 'only then will he [the ascending lover] give birth not to images of virtue (οὐκ εἴδωλα ἀρετῆς), because he is in touch with no images (οὐκ εἰδώλου *ἐφαπτομένῳ*), but to true virtue, because he is in touch with the truth (ἀληθῆ, ἅτε τοῦ ἀληθοῦς *ἐφαπτομένῳ*)' (my translation).

9 Note that this question also opens the *Symposium* (172b-c): πρότερον δέ μοι, ἦ δ' ὅς, εἰπέ· *σὺ αὐτὸς παρεγένου* τῇ συνουσίᾳ ταύτῃ ἢ οὔ.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

with the master as a symbol (or metonymy) for the (successful) practice of philosophy, while foreshadowing the imperative need to break free from the entanglements of physicality in the course of one's investigation of true reality in a philosophically constructive manner. In the language of the *Phaedo*, the successful separation from the physical body of Socrates becomes part of one's capacity to be a true 'lover of wisdom' (φιλό-σοφος), rather than a 'lover of the body' (φιλο-σώματος).[10]

2 The *Phaedo*

2.1 *Narrative Frames and Emotions*

The *Phaedo* begins with the meeting of Phaedo of Elis with the Pythagorean Echecrates and his circle at Phlius sometime after Socrates' death at Athens. This already offers an interesting difference to the *Symposium* and a similarity with the *Theaetetus*. Apollodorus' narration to the anonymous friend takes place in Athens while Socrates is still alive,[11] whereas Phaedo's narration of Socrates' arguments on the immortality of the soul occurs after his death in remote Phlius.[12] In the dialogue's opening conversation the emphatic use of the pronoun αὐτός ('the man himself') is remarkable:[13]

ΕΧΕΚΡΑΤΗΣ: αὐτός, ὦ Φαίδων, παρεγένου Σωκράτει ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ᾗ τὸ φάρμακον ἔπιεν ἐν τῷ δεσμωτηρίῳ, ἢ ἄλλου του ἤκουσας;

ΦΑΙΔΩΝ: *αὐτός*, ὦ Ἐχέκρατες.

ΕΧΕΚΡΑΤΗΣ: τί οὖν δή ἐστιν ἅττα εἶπεν ὁ ἀνὴρ πρὸ τοῦ θανάτου; καὶ πῶς ἐτελεύτα; *ἡδέως* γὰρ ἂν ἐγὼ ἀκούσαιμι (*Phd.* 57a1-6).

ECHECRATES: *Were you there with Socrates yourself*, Phaedo, on the day he drank the poison in the prison, or did you hear of it from someone else?

PHAEDO: I was there *myself*, Echecrates.

10 *Phd.* 68c1; cf. 66e3. Cf. *mutatis mutandis* also the distinction between the 'sight-lovers' and the 'lovers of wisdom' in *Resp.* 5.471c-476c.

11 See *Symp.* 173b where Apollodorus claims that he has in fact corroborated some of the details of the story with Socrates himself.

12 Gilead (1994) 25–33.

13 Burger (1984) 7 also observes the emphatic placement of the pronoun but detects affinities with its use in the metaphysical contexts of the dialogue: the word 'itself by itself' will be used later in the *Phaedo* to refer to the soul's separation from the body. On the structural parallel between the narrative frame and the dialogue at large see Burger, Ch. 1.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

ECHECRATES: Then what was it that he said before his death? And how did he meet his end? I would hear about it *with pleasure* (trans. Gallop).

Echecrates and his circle have heard about Socrates’ trial but know next to nothing about the delay of his death, or Socrates’ reaction to the execution.[14] His anxious question reaches eager ears; for Phaedo, too, ‘it is the greatest of pleasures (ἥδιστον) to recall Socrates (μεμνῆσθαι), whether speaking himself or listening to someone else’:[15]

ΦΑΙΔΩΝ: καὶ μὴν ἔγωγε **θαυμάσια ἔπαθον** παραγενόμενος. οὔτε γὰρ ὡς θανάτῳ παρόντα με ἀνδρὸς ἐπιτηδείου **ἔλεος εἰσῄει· εὐδαίμων γάρ μοι ἀνὴρ ἐφαίνετο**, ὦ Ἐχέκρατες, καὶ τοῦ τρόπου καὶ τῶν λόγων, **ὡς ἀδεῶς καὶ γενναίως** ἐτελεύτα, ὥστε μοι ἐκεῖνον παρίστασθαι μηδ’ εἰς Ἅιδου ἰόντα ἄνευ θείας μοίρας ἰέναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκεῖσε ἀφικόμενον εὖ πράξειν [59a] εἴπερ τις πώποτε καὶ ἄλλος. διὰ δὴ ταῦτα οὐδὲν πάνυ μοι **ἐλεινὸν εἰσῄει**, ὡς εἰκὸς ἂν δόξειεν εἶναι παρόντι **πένθει, οὔτε αὖ ἡδονὴ** ὡς ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ ἡμῶν ὄντων ὥσπερ εἰώθεμεν–καὶ γὰρ οἱ λόγοι τοιοῦτοί τινες ἦσαν–ἀλλ’ **ἀτεχνῶς ἄτοπόν τί μοι πάθος παρῆν καί τις ἀήθης κρᾶσις ἀπό τε τῆς ἡδονῆς συγκεκραμένη ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς λύπης**, ἐνθυμουμένῳ ὅτι αὐτίκα ἐκεῖνος ἔμελλε τελευτᾶν. **καὶ πάντες οἱ παρόντες** σχεδόν τι οὕτω διεκείμεθα, τοτὲ μὲν γελῶντες, ἐνίοτε δὲ δακρύοντες, εἷς δὲ ἡμῶν καὶ διαφερόντως, Ἀπολλόδωρος – οἶσθα γάρ που τὸν ἄνδρα καὶ τὸν τρόπον αὐτοῦ.

ΕΧΕΚΡΑΤΗΣ: πῶς γὰρ οὔ;

ΦΑΙΔΩΝ: *ἐκεῖνός τε τοίνυν παντάπασιν οὕτως εἶχεν, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔγωγε ἐτεταράγμην καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι* (*Phd.* 58e1-b4).

PHAEDO: I myself was curiously affected while I was there. It wasn’t pity that visited me, as might have been expected for someone present at the death of an intimate friend; because the man seemed to me happy, Echecrates, both in his manner and in his words; so fearlessly and nobly was meeting his end; and so I felt assured that even on his way to Hades he would not go without divine providence, and that when he arrived there

14 Johnson (1998) 578–579; Gilead (1994) 27–28; Casertano (2015) 272–273.

15 *Phd.* 58d4-6: ἀλλὰ **σχολάζω** γε καὶ πειράσομαι ὑμῖν διηγήσασθαι· καὶ γὰρ τὸ μεμνῆσθαι Σωκράτους καὶ αὐτὸν λέγοντα καὶ ἄλλου ἀκούοντα ἔμοιγε ἀεὶ πάντων **ἥδιστον**.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

he would fare well, if ever any man did. *That's why I wasn't visited at all by the pity that would seem natural for someone present at a scene of sorrow*, nor again by the pleasure from our being occupied, as usual, with philosophy – because the discussion was, in fact, of that sort – but *a simply extraordinary feeling* was upon me, *a sort of strange mixture of pleasure and pain combined*, as I reflected that Socrates was shortly to die. *All of us there were affected in much the same way*, *now laughing*, *now in tears* one of us quite exceptionally so, Apollodorus – I think you know the man and his manner.

ECHECRATES: Of course.

PHAEDO: *Well, he was completely overcome by this state*; *and I myself was much upset*, *as were the others* (trans. Gallop).

The beginning of the dialogue signals an emphatic use of emotional language, bringing up within a philosophical context the elicitation of tragic emotions (ἔλεος, ἐλεινὸν εἰσῄει, πένθει, ἡδονή, λύπη). Plato draws a sharp distinction between the emotional state of Socrates in the face of his own death and that of the internal audience, namely those present in the Athenian prison. Phaedo's narration of the story to Echecrates subdivides the dialogue's internal audience further. By adding another narratological layer to the dialogue, Plato introduces an auditor, who has not been an eye-witness to the Socratic *pathos*.[16] Echecrates resembles in this respect the dialogue's readers, who from a narratological point of view stand on the other side of the spectrum, since they rely entirely on the verbal account in order to learn about the last day of Socrates and his death. As scholars have observed, ancient Greek literary aesthetics (represented as early as Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*) make no 'absolute distinction between the effects of visual (dramatic) versus verbal representation'.[17] Although the prevalent view often expressed in ancient Greek literature is that sight (and autopsy) is more reliable and trustworthy than mere hearsay, Greek authors of the fourth and fifth centuries B.C. seek to elide the distinction between verbal and visual representation as far as possible.[18] Both Gorgias and Aristotle emphasise the magisterial capacity of *logos* to effect 'vision' by

16 On the dynamics between internal and external audiences see also Gilead (1994) 23–86. Echecrates' question in *Phd.* 58c-d stresses the fact that Socrates did not die alone: […] καὶ τίνες οἱ παραγενόμενοι τῶν ἐπιτηδείων τῷ ἀνδρί; ἢ οὐκ εἴων οἱ ἄρχοντες παρεῖναι, ἀλλ' *ἔρημος* ἐτελεύτα φίλων.

17 See Cairns (2017) 64.

18 Cf. Hom. *Il.* 2. 484–490. See also Cairns (2017) 63–64 with n. 39.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

means of ‘visualisation’ (*enargeia*).[19] In this respect, the faculty of imagination triggers affective and somatic responses which are comparable to those caused by autopsy and direct vision. Plato himself seems to assert something in this direction when he has the rhapsode Ion, in the dialogue named after him, arguing that he is so virtuoso a performer/narrator of Homer, that he can very persuasively feign the emotions of the various Homeric characters and prime his audience to experience them as well.[20] The diffusion of emotion through the audience’s activation of *phantasia* by means of *logos* would indicate that the auditor of a story feels the same emotions as the eyewitness. Indeed, this might be why people derive pleasure from listening to stories in the first place.

Echecrates’ opening question to Phaedo (‘were you there yourself?’) and Phaedo’s eagerness to describe in strikingly tragic words how everyone felt inside the prison would appear to resonate closely with the views expressed in the *Ion*. Both Echecrates and the readers seek to participate in Phaedo’s last encounter with Socrates, to be part of the atmosphere in the Athenian prison and to hear Socrates’ last words as though they were there themselves. But does Plato treat the flow of emotions by Phaedo in the *Phaedo* in the same way he presents the rhapsode Ion boasting about the affective response he elicits from his audiences?

Let us turn to the *Phaedo*. According to Phaedo, not everyone experienced the same *pathos* in this prison. Socrates appeared prosperous (εὐδαίμων) and faced his imminent death fearlessly (ἀδεῶς) and bravely (γενναίως).[21] The heroic stance had a wondrous effect on Phaedo himself (θαυμάσια ἔπαθον παραγενόμενος), who as a result felt no ‘pity’ (ἔλεος) for Socrates.[22] And yet, as he explains, he did not experience the usual pleasure from his practice of philosophy either, but an ill-defined, uncommon combination of pain and pleasure, which he describes as *atopon* (‘out of place’, ‘extraordinary’).[23] The others had a similar emotional response as well. All were affected in the same strange way as Phaedo, ‘now laughing, now in tears’ (τοτὲ μὲν γελῶντες, ἐνίοτε δὲ δακρύοντες), while one man, Apollodorus, stood out alone in his intense emotional suffering. His reaction to Socrates’ imminent death affected all the others who

19 See Gorg. *Hel.* 8–14. Cf. Arist. *Poet.* 14.1453b1-7 and 26.1462a10-18. See discussion in Segal (1962) 99–155; Halliwell (2011) 274–282; and Heath (1987) 7.

20 *Ion* 535c: ἐγὼ γὰρ ὅταν ἐλεινόν τι λέγω, δακρύων ἐμπίμπλανταί μου οἱ ὀφθαλμοί· ὅταν τε φοβερὸν ἢ δεινόν, ὀρθαὶ αἱ τρίχες ἵστανται ὑπὸ φόβου καὶ ἡ καρδία πηδᾷ. See also 535d-e; Cairns (2017) 65–66.

21 *Phd.* 58e4.

22 *Phd.* 58e1-2; cf. 59a1-2. On these lines, see also Rowe (1993) 111–112.

23 *Phd.* 58e1: *ὡς θανάτῳ παρόντα με* ἀνδρὸς ἐπιτηδείου; cf. 59a3: *ὡς ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ* ἡμῶν ὄντων ὥσπερ εἰώθεμεν.

desperately tried to control themselves before Socrates (αὐτὸς ἔγωγε ἐτεταράγμην καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι).

The affective responses in the introductory scene are matched by Phaedo's detailed description of their reactions to Socrates' consumption of the poison in the final scene of the dialogue:

> καὶ ἡμῶν οἱ πολλοὶ τέως μὲν ἐπιεικῶς οἷοί τε ἦσαν κατέχειν τὸ μὴ δακρύειν, ὡς δὲ εἴδομεν πίνοντά τε καὶ πεπωκότα, οὐκέτι, **ἀλλ' ἐμοῦ γε βίᾳ καὶ αὐτοῦ ἀστακτὶ ἐχώρει τὰ δάκρυα, ὥστε ἐγκαλυψάμενος ἀπέκλαον ἐμαυτόν** – **οὐ γὰρ δὴ ἐκεῖνόν γε**, ἀλλὰ **τὴν ἐμαυτοῦ τύχην**, οἵου ἀνδρὸς ἑταίρου ἐστερημένος εἴην. ὁ δὲ Κρίτων ἔτι πρότερος ἐμοῦ, **ἐπειδὴ οὐχ οἷός τ' ἦν κατέχειν τὰ δάκρυα**, ἐξανέστη. Ἀπολλόδωρος δὲ καὶ ἐν τῷ ἔμπροσθεν χρόνῳ οὐδὲν ἐπαύετο δακρύων, καὶ δὴ καὶ τότε **ἀναβρυχησάμενος κλάων καὶ ἀγανακτῶν** οὐδένα ὅντινα οὐ κατέκλασε τῶν παρόντων πλήν γε αὐτοῦ Σωκράτους (117c-d).
> Till then most of us had been fairly well able to restrain our tears; but when we saw he was drinking, that he'd actually drunk it, we could do so no longer. In my own case, the tears came pouring out in spite of myself, so that I covered my face and wept for myself – not for him, no, but for my own misfortune in being deprived of such a man for a companion. Even before me, Crito had moved away, when he was unable to restrain his tears. And Apollodorus, who even earlier had been continuously in tears, now burst forth into such a storm of weeping and grieving, that he made everyone present break down except Socrates himself (trans. Gallop).

Socrates drinks the hemlock without 'the least tremor' or 'change of colour' (οὐδὲν τρέσας οὐδὲ διαφθείρας οὔτε τοῦ χρώματος οὔτε τοῦ προσώπου);[24] Phaedo, however, bursts into tears, covers his face and weeps not for Socrates but for himself, for losing such a man.[25] Crito, unable to restrain his tears, hides away and weeps (117d1-2); and Apollodorus, who was very emotional from the start, now 'bursts forth into such a storm of weeping and grieving, that he made everyone present break down except Socrates himself' (117c5-d6). What can we infer from these remarks? The *penthos* for the loss of the beloved teacher and friend comes of course as no surprise; this is the last day they see Socrates alive. However, prominent in the scholarly literature is an interpretation of the *Phaedo* as a philosophical tragedy that renders Socrates a philosophical

24 *Phd.* 117b2-4: οὐδὲν τρέσας οὐδὲ διαφθείρας οὔτε τοῦ χρώματος οὔτε τοῦ προσώπου; cf. 117c2-3: καὶ ἅμ' εἰπὼν ταῦτα ἐπισχόμενος καὶ μάλα εὐχερῶς καὶ εὐκόλως ἐξέπιεν.

25 *Phd.* 117c8: The similarity of his reaction to Odysseus' lament in *Odyssey* 8.83–86 is remarkable. See Casertano (2015) 396. On Phaedo's emotions see also Munteanu (2012) 67–68.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

hero of Plato's Academy.[26] Conducive to this interpretation is the employment of the tragic words 'pity' and 'fear' to describe the audience's emotional reaction to the spectacle of death.[27] In a tragedy, or within a narrative, pity as an emotional response is a third-party, onlookers' response to the *pathos* of a character. Internal eyewitnesses feel pity for another character's calamity and fear for themselves.[28] In Plato's dialogue, however, these tragic emotions are ingeniously reversed. Socrates as a focalising character in the philosophical drama does not regard his fate as a calamity or disaster, nor does he experience it as a fearful suffering, and this affects the emotions he primes and arouses in his friends, who *mutatis mutandis* may be compared to the chorus of a tragedy.[29]

But how do the narrative frames relate to the elicitation of emotion in the dialogue's multiple audiences and readership? I argue that the frames allow Plato to dramatise one of the dialogue's main arguments, that a life devoted to the practice of philosophy – the life that Socrates is depicted as having lived – is the only way to achieve the purification of one's soul from the 'countless distractions', the 'lusts and desires, fears and fantasies' of the body.[30] In his last conversation, Socrates, who has successfully separated his soul from his physical body, constructs a series of arguments whose aim is to divest the interlocutors of the fear of death and appease their pain at his imminent demise.[31] Contrary to the world of theatre, Plato has Socrates treat the tragic emotions of pain and pleasure, pity and fear from his own vantage point of the world of the intellect. Hence, in the internal narrative frame, we see Phaedo feeling neither pain from the loss of Socrates, nor pleasure from the practice of philosophy, but a 'peculiar mixture' (*krasis/mixis*) of the

26 Burger (1984); Nussbaum (1986) and (1992) 261–290; Gilead (1994); Rowe (1993) 112; Casertano (2015); Munteanu (2012) 56–58; White (2000) 151–174; Petraki (2018b) 127–162. Cf. Halliwell (2002) 106–108.

27 See *Phdr.* 268c on tragedy's οἰκτράς, φοβεράς and ἀπειλητικὰς ῥήσεις; on *eleos*, see *Phd.* 58e2, 59a2; on fear 77d7; cf. 88c1-7. Cf. also *Resp*. 606a-b; Cairns (2017) 66.

28 See Konstan (2001); Halliwell (2002) 215–230; Munteanu (2012) 66; Cairns (2017) 67–68.

29 Gilead (1994) at 39 *et passim* rightly sees a comparison of the audience on the last day of Socrates with 'the multitude who see a performance of tragedy in the Greek theatre'.

30 In 66b1-67a2, Socrates description of the 'body as hindrance' (65a9) emphatically invests in emotional language. See, in particular 66b7-c5: *ἐρώτων δὲ καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ φόβων καὶ εἰδώλων παντοδαπῶν καὶ φλυαρίας* ἐμπίμπλησιν ἡμᾶς πολλῆς, ὥστε τὸ λεγόμενον ὡς ἀληθῶς τῷ ὄντι ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ οὐδὲ φρονῆσαι ἡμῖν ἐγγίγνεται οὐδέποτε οὐδέν. *καὶ* γὰρ πολέμους *καὶ* στάσεις *καὶ* μάχας οὐδὲν ἄλλο παρέχει ἢ τὸ σῶμα *καὶ* αἱ τούτου ἐπιθυμίαι. Cf. Peterson (2011) 190–193.

31 In 70b1-4, Cebes acknowledges that 'one needs no little reassuring and convincing (οὐκ ὀλίγης *παραμυθίας* δεῖται *καὶ πίστεως*), that when the man has died, his soul exists, and that it possesses some power and wisdom'.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

two as a result of *his physical proximity* to Socrates, who himself stands strikingly aloof from the bodily emotions that disturb the soul.[32] In the external narrative frame, on the other hand, the secondary audience, Phaedo, now in his role as the narrator of the story, and Echecrates, as a mere auditor, feel only *pleasure* from recounting and listening to stories about Socrates.[33] The similarity here with the more complex narrative frame of the *Symposium* is striking. Socrates' friends and followers, Apollodorus, Aristodemus, and Phaedo, all take upon themselves the duty to keep his memory alive. All devote their lives to the dissemination of the Socratic conversations to those who have not met him *in the flesh* and they all comment on the anticipated reaction of pleasure from this philosophical activity.[34] This parallel/correspondence between narrative frames and the narrators' emotions suggests that one's increasing narratological distance, in terms of somatic proximity, from Socrates results in an increasing divergence of emotional response. The

32 The use of the phrase ἀήθης κρᾶσις and the adjective ἄτοπον in relation to the mixture of pleasure and pain are far from fortuitous here. Socrates also uses the word *atopon* in relation to emotions in 60b1-c7, to introduce his long discussion of bodily pleasure and pain. These comments on the confusing 'compresence' of pleasure and pain in 60b-c (ἀπό τε τῆς ἡδονῆς συγκεκραμένη ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς λύπης) are read in parallel to his later remarks in 69a6-c3 about the relationship of human virtue with pleasure, pain and knowledge. In this passage Plato employs for the first time the metaphor of 'shadow-painting' (σκιαγραφία) to denote the indecipherable mixture of emotions. The discussion foreshadows Plato's treatment of pleasure in the *Republic* 9 and in the *Philebus* (50b1-4) and suggests that Socrates and Phaedo do not share the same philosophical conception of pleasure and pain in the dialogue. On these passages, see the detailed discussion in Petraki (2018a) 1–33. See also Casertano (2015) 396–397; Gallop (1975) 75, 98–103; *id.* (2001) 275–286; Rowe (1993) 147–151.

33 Contra Burger (1984) 7, 16–17, who argues that Phaedo attempts 'to recreate in his audience the emotions of pity and fear' that he had experienced himself in the prison. In the prologue it is expressly stated that Echecrates and Phaedo *take pleasure* from the narration of the story of Socrates' death. The only coincidence of emotions I detect between the two frames, the narrative and the dramatic, is to be found in *Phd.* 88c-e (discussed below), where Echecrates shares the emotions of fear of the internal audience, should Simmias' disastrous argument about the immortality of the soul not be successfully counterargued by Socrates (88c: πάντες [internal audience] οὖν ἀκούσαντες εἰπόντων αὐτῶν *ἀηδῶς* διετέθημεν; cf. 88e: πῇ ὁ Σωκράτης μετῆλθε τὸν λόγον; καὶ πότερον κἀκεῖνος, *ὥσπερ ὑμᾶς φῄς* [internal/external audience], ἔνδηλός τι ἐγένετο *ἀχθόμενος* ἢ οὔ, ἀλλὰ *πρᾴως* ἐβοήθει τῷ λόγῳ;). On the pleasure that one derives from philosophy, see also Erler (2016) 103–118.

34 On Aristodemus as Socrates' 'lover' see *Symp.* 173a8-b4. Apollodorus refers to the pleasure he derives from telling stories about Socrates in *Symp.* 173c3-d3: ὅταν μέν τινας περὶ φιλοσοφίας λόγους ἢ αὐτὸς ποιῶμαι ἢ ἄλλων ἀκούω, χωρὶς τοῦ οἴεσθαι ὠφελεῖσθαι *ὑπερφυῶς ὡς χαίρω*· ὅταν δὲ ἄλλους τινάς, ἄλλως τε καὶ τοὺς ὑμετέρους τοὺς τῶν πλουσίων καὶ χρηματιστικῶν, αὐτός τε *ἄχθομαι* ὑμᾶς τε τοὺς ἑταίρους *ἐλεῶ* […].

- 978-90-04-44399-0

interlocutors, who have met Socrates in the flesh, experience diverse emotions, which, although they can be prompts for maneuvering the emotional responses of the external audiences, need not be identical to those felt by them. In this respect, Plato does not deviate much from the way in which Ancient Greek aesthetic and poetic theory views the intricate emotional interconnections formed between the focalising sufferer, the internal/external audience(s) and the readership. The eyewitness does not experience the same emotions as the suffering hero. In line with Halliwell, ‘When we feel pity, we do not share the sufferer’s subjectivity: however much we may draw emotionally near to it, or move vicariously with its psychological expression, we remain, *qua* feelers of pity, outside the immediate, “first-person” reality of the pain, whether physical or mental’.[35] The same holds true for the communication of emotion between internal and external audience. The cues may be embedded in the narrative but we need not assume that ‘the external audience replicates the response of the internal’.[36] As Cairns puts it with regard to *phrike*:

> the external audience is not feeling with the internal, imaginatively simulating or reconstructing their first-person response; nor is it simply ‘catching’ that response in the purely unconscious manner that is supposedly typical of emotional contagion. These are third-person, onlookers’ responses in each case.[37]

The *Phaedo*’s adaptation and redefinition of the dynamics of ‘emotional contagion’ is insightful. First, the main character’s experience is not that of the eyewitnesses: Socrates does not suffer. Rather, it is the eye-witnessing internal audience who are the focalisers of the (rejected) tragic emotions: Phaedo and the others do not feel pity (an observer’s response to another person’s *pathos*) but they do feel fear and vulnerability before death, for the loss of Socrates, for their own ability to practice philosophy successfully, when the master is gone.[38]

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35 Halliwell (2002) 216.

36 Cairns (2017) quotation at 71.

37 *Ibid.* 66–71.

38 Contra Munteanu (2012) 68. Munteanu rightly argues that Phaedo’s ‘grief is devoid of the common tragic emotions since Socrates is not afraid of death’, but she assumes that ‘his disciple does not fear for Socrates, and learns from the master-philosopher not to fear death for himself’. This is indeed Socrates’ lesson in the *Phaedo* but, in my view, the dialogue does not present the internal audience as being fully persuaded by Socrates or completely liberated from the fear of death. The defeat of fear may result from the repetitive narration of the dialogue as a παραμυθία. See discussion further below.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

In Gorgias' words, Socrates' friends 'feel a certain *pathema* of their own'.[39] In the same way, the secondary audience of narrators and narratees are also divested of the emotion of pity; they too must address their own fear, but, contrary to the eyewitnesses, they appear to derive *pleasure* from listening to the verbal representation of Socrates' death.

In line with my argument, in this dialogue, the gradual variation of the emotional responses of the various audiences is symbolised by one's *physical proximity to the body* of Socrates. In other words, 'emotional contagion' achieved through storytelling is an extension and expansion of direct tactile contact with Socrates. Socrates himself is depicted as having successfully dissociated his 'true self' from his own body, but his family and friends cannot separate themselves from him.[40] Their failure to do so symbolises their inability to break free from their own embodiment, from the fetters of physicality at large. On the other hand, the narratees follow Socrates' argumentation from afar, through the filtered and mediated account of the narrator. In the *Phaedo*, Echecrates is not an eyewitness to the death scene. *Mutatis mutandis*, in the *Symposium*, Apollodorus and Phoenix's unnamed narratees do not suffer Alcibiades' painful love for Socrates.[41] At the far end of this complex narratological spectrum stand the readers for whom the narrative frames symbolise their distance from Socrates, but also from all the Socratic interlocutors and narrators, as part of their own developing philosophical independence.[42]

The readers' emotional education is grounded in the act of visualisation (*enargeia*) as a result of the vividness of the account, but also in their regulated exposure to the emotions of pleasure, pain, pity and fear on which the dialogue seeks to educate them. The mixture of pleasure and pain, which Phaedo describes as *atopon* in the internal narrative frame, is transformed into

39 See Gorgias *Helen* 9: ἴδιόν τι πάθημα, with discussion in Halliwell (2002) 77.

40 See *Phd.* 60a1-b1. Cf. 115c4-d2 ('[Bury me] however you wish', said he; 'provided you catch me, that is, and I don't get away from you'). In 60a-b, Xanthippe is carried away from Socrates in lament (ἡ Ξανθίππη ἀνηυφήμησέ τε … ἀπαγέτω τις αὐτήν … ἀπῆγόν τινες and βοῶσάν τε καὶ κοπτομένην). For Apollodorus' excessive emotional reaction at the death scene, see 117d1-6: οὐδὲν ἐπαύετο δακρύων … ἀναβρυχησάμενος κλάων καὶ ἀγανακτῶν. As has been observed, Socrates' reference to εὐφημία in 117e1 relates the intra-dramatic characters' excessive emotional reaction in the death scene to analogous scenes in the tragedies. See the detailed analysis of the scene by Loriaux (1975–1981) 2.26–31; Dixsaut (1991) 321, n. 36. According to Gilead (1994) 39–40, Xanthippe and Apollodorus are representatives of the emotional Greek audience in the theatre.

41 Alcibiades repeatedly uses the verb πάσχω in his speech to refer to his love for Socrates: twice in 215d8, 215e4, e5; 216a4, a8, c5; 217e6, e7. See esp. 215d-e and 218a-b.

42 For the ways in which Plato's philosophical dialogues educate readers both dianoetically and emotionally, see Cotton (2014) and in particular 130–132.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

philosophical pleasure for the interlocutors of the external frame and for the Platonic readership, which is dissuaded from stepping into Apollodorus' shoes in the lament of the death scene. This training of emotions – Plato's response to the choral emotions of Athenian tragedy – brings the secondary internal audience and the readers together and aims to create an increasingly expanding 'audience' of Socrates' heroisation, which transcends the *hic et nunc* of the Athenian prison. In contrast to the discordant emotional response of Socrates' friends in the prison, this extended Platonic audience reacts in unison and harmoniously since, from the beginning of the dialogue, it is guided to experience the (same) feeling of philosophical pleasure. The very experience of telling and retelling stories about Socrates channels a kind of 'pleasure' (ἡδέως/ ἀεὶ πάντων ἥδιστον) that stems from the dynamic force of philosophical speech and, in effect, instills strong bonds of empathy and builds an ever-expanding philosophical community.[43]

In the last section of this article I turn to the adumbration of the Socratic body in the *Phaedo*, arguing that it is assigned multiple roles in this work. The minimalistic illustration of the Socratic body promotes a close association, indeed a symbolic resemblance, of the Socratic soul to the world of the intellect.[44] In this direction, Plato makes Socrates not only map out the philosophical journey from the sensible to the dianoetic, but also enact and dramatise the very fundamentals of this philosophical journey through his dissociation from the physical 'body' and its entanglements. The interlocutors, the secondary internal audience and the readers are all exposed to a type of argumentation that aims to facilitate the 'ascent' from the (individual) body and soul of Socrates to the disincarnate soul *at large*.[45] Accordingly, in its internal narrative frame the dialogue maps out one's progress from being 'a lover of the body' to becoming 'a lover of wisdom'. It is in this respect that the employment of narrative frames forms an integral part of what I have called the 'dialectics of the body'.

2.2 *The Socratic Body in the* Phaedo

The *Phaedo* opens with Echecrates' impatient question about Socrates' death and ends with a memorable zooming in on the body of Socrates after he has

43 On the intensification of socio-political bonds through the type of pleasure generated by poetic performance see Peponi (2009) 39–70 and 2012; Wiles (2011) 47. Cf. Griswold (2010) 127–154.

44 See Ross (1951); White (1976); Silverman (2002).

45 The relation of the 'transcendent soul' to the '*individual* embodied souls' is a complex one and cannot be addressed within the scope of this article. See Casertano (2015) 433–445; Bostock (1986) and *id.* (1999) 404–424.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

drunk the hemlock and waits quietly, lying motionless for the numbness to reach his soul. Socrates is surrounded by all his close friends (all except Plato). Present in the scene is also the mixer of the poison, of whom we learn that he was greatly enchanted by the dying philosopher. In the scholarly literature, the death scene has been interpreted as depicting with an almost ritual solemnity and calmness the gradual separation of Socrates' soul from his body (note the use of the noun εὐφημία in 117e1):[46]

> ὁ δὲ περιελθών, ἐπειδὴ οἱ *βαρύνεσθαι ἔφη τὰ σκέλη*, κατεκλίθη ὕπτιος – οὕτω γὰρ ἐκέλευεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος – καὶ ἅμα *ἐφαπτόμενος αὐτοῦ οὗτος* ὁ δοὺς τὸ φάρμακον, διαλιπὼν χρόνον *ἐπεσκόπει τοὺς πόδας καὶ τὰ σκέλη*, κἄπειτα σφόδρα *πιέσας* αὐτοῦ τὸν πόδα ἤρετο εἰ αἰσθάνοιτο, ὁ δ' οὐκ ἔφη. καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο *αὖθις τὰς κνήμας*· καὶ ἐπανιὼν οὕτως ἡμῖν *ἐπεδείκνυτο* ὅτι ψύχοιτό τε καὶ πήγνυτο. καὶ *αὐτὸς ἥπτετο* καὶ εἶπεν ὅτι, ἐπειδὰν πρὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ γένηται αὐτῷ, τότε οἰχήσεται. ἤδη οὖν σχεδόν τι αὐτοῦ ἦν τὰ περὶ τὸ ἦτρον ψυχόμενα, καὶ ἐκκαλυψάμενος ἐνεκεκάλυπτο γάρ, εἶπεν – ὃ δὴ τελευταῖον ἐφθέγξατο – ὦ Κρίτων, ἔφη, τῷ Ασκληπιῷ ὀφείλομεν ἀλεκτρυόνα· ἀλλὰ ἀπόδοτε καὶ μὴ ἀμελήσητε (*Phd.* 117e4-118a9).
>
> He walked about, and when he said that *his legs felt heavy* he lay down on his back – as the man told him – and then the man, *this one who'd given him* the poison, *felt him*, and after an interval *examined his feet and legs*; he then *pressed* his foot hard and asked if he could feel it, and Socrates said not. After that he *felt his shins once more*; and moving upwards in this way, *he showed us* that he was becoming cold and numb. *He went on feeling him*, and said that when the coldness reached his heart, he would be gone. By this time the coldness was somewhere in the region of his abdomen, when he uncovered his face – it had been covered over – and spoke; and this was in fact his last utterance: 'Crito,' he said, 'we owe a cock to Asclepius: please pay the debt, and don't neglect it'. (trans. Gallop).

The liberation of the 'true self' from the 'prison of the corporeal', like the one symbolised in the death scene, forms the main argumentation of Socrates in this dialogue. In his discussion with Cebes and Simmias, Socrates had aimed both to persuade his friends that his 'true self' (the soul) would not die along with his body and to direct them towards the patient and persistent practice of philosophy as the single most important act of care for their own

46 See *Phd.* 115b-c.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

souls.[47] And yet, on the basis of the emphasis and priority given to the soul as compared to the body throughout the *Phaedo*, Plato's choice to end the dialogue by focusing on a detailed description of the hemlock's effect on Socrates raises a number of questions. These become even more pressing if we take into consideration Christopher Gill's remarks that Plato gives only a selective account of the symptoms of hemlock poising, focusing on two of them, numbness and a single final spasm (ἐκινήθη, 118a11). For Gill, this selectiveness reflects the author's wish to render in visual terms the intelligible meaning of his argument, the soul's gradual separation from the body.[48] In my view, however, the literary ramifications of the death scene run much deeper than this and could make us view anew the symbolic significance of the Socratic body in the *Phaedo*.

The death scene has an almost surgical accuracy and an artistic literary economy. The description of how sensation gradually leaves the body is based on the combination of two words: the pronoun *autos*, the very same word that opened the dialogue, which refers to the toucher, and the repetition of verbs that indicate haptic contact, 'to touch' (ἅπτομαι) and 'to embrace' (ἐφάπτομαι), which earlier in the dialogue were employed almost exclusively to describe the soul's 'communion' with the Forms.[49] The commentators of the *Phaedo* have found the use of *autos* in this context puzzling. The subject of *ephaptomenos* can be readily identified with the hemlock mixer, who has Socrates' body in a firm hold, possibly in an attempt to control the spasms and contractions. It is less easy, however, to identify the person behind *autos*, namely the man who touches Socrates to check the progress of the paralysis. Is it the hemlock mixer or is it now Socrates himself (αὐτός) who demonstrates an extraordinary calmness in describing the effect of the poison? Among the different readings proposed, of particular interest is that of Burnet and Bluck, who argue that the pronoun *autos* refers to the guard, who demonstrates (ἐπεδείκνυτο, 118a2) the hemlock's effect to the friends, and that as part of this 'demonstration' the others had also touched the dying Socrates before him.[50]

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47 See *Phd.* 66b-c: κινδυνεύει τοι ὥσπερ ἀτραπός τις ἐκφέρειν ἡμᾶς [μετὰ τοῦ λόγου ἐν τῇ σκέψει], ὅτι, ἕως ἂν τὸ σῶμα ἔχωμεν καὶ συμπεφυρμένη ᾖ ἡμῶν ἡ ψυχὴ μετὰ τοιούτου κακοῦ, οὐ μή ποτε κτησώμεθα ἱκανῶς οὗ ἐπιθυμοῦμεν· φαμὲν δὲ τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ ἀληθές. In *Phd.* 68b-c the true philosopher, who is a lover of wisdom and not of the body, should spend his life trying to keep his soul 'itself in itself', that is, separate from his body.

48 See Gill (1973) 25–28; Rowe (1993) 295.

49 In the same vein, the verbs ψύχοιτό τε καὶ πήγνυτο are used to indicate corporeal numbness. The verbs ἅπτομαι and ἐφάπτομαι have similar metaphoric connotations in the *Symposium* and the *Republic*. See above n. 8.

50 The use of the pronoun αὐτός in the death scene has preoccupied scholars. Verdenius (1958) 193–243 believes that this pronoun is used simply to emphasise the fact that the

The scene is moving and impressive. Contrary to what I have argued above, it almost conveys a sense of witnessing the death directly, which is what Echecrates had asked for at the beginning of the dialogue. But there is more than what meets the eye here. In my view, the death scene with its emphasis on the toucher's haptic contact with the Socratic body calls for a comparison with other Platonic dialogues that also thematise people's touch of Socrates. In Plato's works the touch of Socrates is a rare event, never 'innocent', always remarkable and philosophically significant.[51] The references to the haptic contact with the Socratic body are charged with epistemological significance, since the Socratic interlocutors associate the touch of Socrates with the acquisition of knowledge by way of, as it were, contagion. The most characteristic example of the value assigned to the somatic proximity with Socrates is found in the *Theages*, a dialogue that addresses the *quasi*-magical influence of the Socratic *daimonion* on Socrates' friends and followers.

> ἐγώ σοι ἐρῶ, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔμαθον μὲν παρά σου οὐδὲν πώποτε, ὡς αὐτὸς οἶσθα· ἐπεδίδουν δὲ ὁπότε σοι συνείην, κἂν εἰ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ μόνον οἰκίᾳ εἴην, μὴ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ δὲ οἰκήματι, μᾶλλον δὲ ὁπότε ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ οἰκήματι, καὶ ἔμοιγε ἐδόκουν πολὺ μᾶλλον ὁπότε ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ οἰκήματι ὢν λέγοντός σου βλέποιμι πρὸς σέ, μᾶλλον ἢ ὁπότε ἄλλοσε ὁρῴην, πολὺ δὲ μάλιστα καὶ πλεῖστον ἐπεδίδουν *ὁπότε παρ' αὐτόν σε καθοίμην ἐχόμενός σου καὶ ἁπτόμενος*· νῦν δέ, ἦ δ' ὅς, πᾶσα ἐκείνη ἡ ἕξις ἐξερρύηκε (*Theages* 130d-e).

subject of ἥπτετο and εἶπεν is different from that of ψύχοιτο and πήγνυτο in the previous sentence. See also Rowe (1993) 295; Gallop (1975) 238 n. 85; Loriaux (1975–1981) vol. 1. Burnet (1911) 117–118, on the other hand, translates *autos* as 'the man himself' (not Socrates) and sees a hint in the text that the *companions had also touched* the body, at the guard's encouragement. Burnet bases this argument on the suggestion of Heindorf (1810) that its use is intended in this context as an invitation for the others present also to touch the body. See also Wohlrab (1875); Bluck (1955) 142–143; Burger (1984) 215. Archer-Hind (1883) and von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1920) believe that *autos* refers to Socrates and not to the guard. Hackforth (1955) 190 accepts Forster's correction and reads αὖθις instead of αὐτός. I find the scenario whereby the guard touches Socrates' body more convincing, even if the view of Burnet and his followers is still very tempting. This passage stresses the final haptic contact and draws much of its dramatic tone from it.

51 So Tarrant (1958) 95. See Alcibiades' comment to Agathon in *Symp*. 213d-e. In the *Phaedo*, our attention is drawn to Socrates' legs and eyes (86d3: διαβλέψας οὖν ὁ Σωκράτης, ὥσπερ τὰ πολλὰ εἰώθει, καὶ μειδιάσας, 116d3: ὁ Σωκράτης ἀναβλέψας πρὸς αὐτόν, 117b4: ἀλλ' ὥσπερ εἰώθει ταυρηδὸν ὑποβλέψας πρὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον, 118a13-4: ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Κρίτων συνέλαβε τὸ στόμα καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς [of Socrates].) Both bodily parts have a symbolic value. Cf. 99e2: ἔδεισα μὴ παντάπασι *τὴν ψυχὴν τυφλωθείην* βλέπων πρὸς τὰ πράγματα τοῖς ὄμμασι. On the legs, see the discussion below.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

> I’ve never learned anything from you, as you know. But I made progress whenever I was with you, even if I was only in the same house and not in the same room – but more when I was in the same room. And it seemed, to me at least, that when I was in the same room and looked at you when you were speaking, I made much more progress than when I looked away. And I made by far the most and greatest progress *when I sat right beside you and physically held on to you or touched you*. But now, he said, all that condition was trickled away. (trans. Smith).

In these lines, Socrates narrates how the young Aristeides experienced this extraordinary influence. Aristeides links his own philosophical development with the physical proximity and somatic touch of Socrates and claims that when he was separated from him, he immediately lost whatever knowledge he had successfully acquired up until that time. The lines describe the philosophical impact of Socrates in a climactic and comical manner, which is unusual for the Platonic dialogues.[52] The climax of Aristeides’ description (*μάλιστα καὶ πλεῖστον ἐπεδίδουν ὁπότε παρ᾽ αὐτόν σε καθοίμην ἐχόμενός σου καὶ ἁπτόμενος*) is a direct allusion to Agathon’s famous words to Socrates in the *Symposium* 175c-d, but also to Alcibiades’ description of his unsuccessful attempt to seduce Socrates, in which instance sexual intercourse and the acquisition of knowledge were confounded.[53] Hence, the author of *Theages* exploits a quasi-magical epistemological motif, which the Platonic dialogues also use but only to reject it.[54] The response to Aristeides’ claims comes from Plato’s Socrates in the *Symposium*:

> καὶ τὸν Σωκράτη καθίζεσθαι καὶ εἰπεῖν ὅτι εὖ ἂν ἔχοι, φάναι, ὦ Ἀγάθων, εἰ τοιοῦτον εἴη ἡ σοφία ὥστ᾽ ἐκ τοῦ πληρεστέρου εἰς τὸ κενώτερον ῥεῖν ἡμῶν, *ἐὰν ἁπτώμεθα ἀλλήλων*, ὥσπερ τὸ ἐν ταῖς κύλιξιν ὕδωρ τὸ διὰ τοῦ ἐρίου ῥέον ἐκ τῆς πληρεστέρας εἰς τὴν κενωτέραν. εἰ γὰρ οὕτως ἔχει καὶ ἡ σοφία, *πολλοῦ τιμῶμαι τὴν παρὰ σοὶ κατάκλισιν·* οἶμαι γάρ με παρὰ σοῦ πολλῆς καὶ καλῆς σοφίας πληρωθήσεσθαι. ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐμὴ φαύλη τις ἂν εἴη, ἢ καὶ ἀμφισβητήσιμος

52 Tarrant (1958) 95–98.

53 *Symp.* 175d: τὸν οὖν Ἀγάθωνα – τυγχάνειν γὰρ ἔσχατον κατακείμενον μόνον – δεῦρ᾽, ἔφη φάναι, Σώκρατες, παρ᾽ ἐμὲ κατάκεισο, *ἵνα καὶ τοῦ σοφοῦ ἁπτόμενός σου ἀπολαύσω*, ὅ σοι προσέστη ἐν τοῖς προθύροις. δῆλον γὰρ ὅτι ηὗρες αὐτὸ καὶ ἔχεις· οὐ γὰρ ἂν προαπέστης. Cf. *Symp.* 219b-c: ἀμφιέσας τὸ ἱμάτιον τὸ ἐμαυτοῦ τοῦτον – καὶ γὰρ ἦν χειμών – ὑπὸ τὸν τρίβωνα κατακλινεὶς τὸν τουτουί, *περιβαλὼν τὼ χεῖρε τούτῳ τῷ δαιμονίῳ* ὡς ἀληθῶς και θαυμαστῷ, κατεκείμην τὴν νύκτα ὅλην.

54 See Tarrant (1958) 95.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

> ὥσπερ ὄναρ οὖσα, ἡ δὲ σὴ λαμπρά τε καὶ πολλὴν ἐπίδοσιν ἔχουσα […] (*Symp.* 175d2-e5).
> Socrates sat down next to him and said, 'How wonderful it would be dear Agathon, if the foolish were filled with wisdom simply *by touching the wise*. If only wisdom were like water, which always flows from a full cup into an empty one when we connect them with a piece of yarn – well, then I would consider it the greatest prize to have the chance *to lie down next to you.* I would soon be overflowing with your wonderful wisdom. My own wisdom is of no account – a shadow in a dream – while yours is bright and radiant and has a splendid future […]'. (trans. Nehamas and Woodruff)

Although dramatically staged in different terms and in another context, Socrates' response to Agathon about the 'contagion' of knowledge is also found in the *Phaedo*. The dialogue indicates that the successful practice of philosophy does not result from one's association with the body in general,[55] or from one's attachment to Socrates in particular, but requires the untiring and dynamic practice of philosophical *logos* that will eventually generate independence. Against this background, Socrates urges his friends to make the groundbreaking departure from the 'somatic' to the dianoetic and the 'intellectual'.

Central to this interpretation is Socrates' advice to Phaedo (of all present in the scene) in 87a-89c. At this stage in the dialogue, Simmias opposes Socrates' argument about the soul's immortality and ontological priority to the perishable body with the objection that the soul 'comes' to the body *a posteriori*, as does harmony in a lyre. At this critical moment, Phaedo breaks the narrative frame to describe to Echecrates the internal audience's fear and philosophical numbness: will Socrates be able to successfully counter Simmias' destructive argument? Will *they* be in a position to cope with such arguments when Socrates is gone?[56] In 89b, for the first time in the dialogue, Plato makes Socrates draw an explicit comparison between his own demise and the death of a type of philosophical discourse deeply rooted in the Platonic Forms:

ΦΑΙΔΩΝ: ἐγὼ ἐρῶ. ἔτυχον γὰρ ἐν δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ καθήμενος παρὰ τὴν κλίνην ἐπὶ χαμαιζήλου τινός, ὁ δὲ ἐπὶ πολὺ ὑψηλοτέρου ἢ ἐγώ. *Καταψήσας οὖν μου τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ συμπιέσας τὰς ἐπὶ τῷ αὐχένι τρίχας – εἰώθει*

55 See *Phd.* 65d-66a where Socrates argues for an epistemological gap between particulars and Forms, and explicitly rejects the human senses as a means to access true reality. The Forms may be inspected only by the soul.

56 *Phd.* 88c-d.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

γάρ, ὁπότε τύχοι, παίζειν μου εἰς τὰς τρίχας – Αὔριον δή, ἔφη, ἴσως, ὦ Φαίδων, τὰς καλὰς ταύτας κόμας ἀποκερῇ.
ἔοικεν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὦ Σώκρατες.
οὔκ, ἄν γε ἐμοὶ πείθῃ.
ἀλλὰ τί; ἦν δ' ἐγώ.
τήμερον, ἔφη, κἀγὼ τὰς ἐμὰς καὶ σὺ ταύτας, *ἐάνπερ γε ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος τελευτήσῃ καὶ μὴ δυνώμεθα αὐτὸν ἀναβιώσασθαι.* καὶ ἔγωγ' ἄν, εἰ σὺ εἴην καί με διαφεύγοι ὁ λόγος, ἔνορκον ἂν ποιησαίμην ὥσπερ Ἀργεῖοι, μὴ πρότερον κομήσειν, πρὶν ἂν νικήσω ἀναμαχόμενος τὸν Σιμμίου τε καὶ Κέβητος λόγον (*Phd.* 89b1-c3).

PHAEDO: I'll tell you. I happened to be sitting to his right, on a stool beside the bed, while he was a good way above me. *Stroking my head and gathering the hair on my neck – it was his way now and again to make fun of my hair* – he said: 'So tomorrow perhaps, Phaedo, you'll cut off those lovely locks'.
'I expect so, Socrates', I replied.
'You won't, if you listen to me'.
'What, then?' I asked.
'Today', he said, 'I'll cut mine and you yours – *if, that is, the argument dies on us and we can't revive it.* For myself, if I were you and the argument got away from me, I should swear an oath, like the Argives, not to grow my hair again till I'd fought back and defeated the argument of Simmias and Cebes'. (trans. Gallop)

Socrates explains to Phaedo that one should mourn not for the death of the philosopher but for the non-resurrectable demise of philosophical *logos*.[57] His encouragement to Phaedo in particular to join forces with him to keep the philosophical dialogue alive and going is followed by the simultaneous touching of Phaedo's hair, a tender gesture from a dying caring teacher to his promising young student. The scene's symbolic value is manifested in Phaedo's transformation from a mere eye-witness of the conversation to the dialogue's future narrator.[58] The temptation to read in this innocent touch a latent, *quasi*-magical, almost therapeutic influence is strong. Again, the Socratic touch does not pass unobserved, only this time Plato portrays Socrates as generously offering to Phaedo (who, remarkably, has not asked for it), what in the *Symposium*,

57 See Nagy (2015).
58 On the historical Phaedo as opposed to the dramatic persona constructed by Plato, see Diog. Laert. 2.9; von Fritz (1938); Ranasinghe (2000) 58; Boys-Stones (2004) 1–23.

for example, he withholds from Agathon and Alcibiades, a fleeting, gentle and calm haptic contact, which Phaedo successfully 'transforms', as it were, into philosophical speech.[59]

The death scene aside, Socrates' touching of Phaedo is the only other reference to a haptic contact with Socrates in the *Phaedo*. Are the two scenes related? How does the final touching of the dying body relate to Socrates' touching of Phaedo and to the attribution of epistemological significance to the 'embodied' Socrates? And most importantly, how does the significance assigned to the Socratic touch in the internal narrative frame affect the readers' response to the dialogue's final scene?

To fully grasp the relation of the two haptic scenes, we need to inspect somewhat more closely Plato's representation of Socrates' body in the *Phaedo*. In this dialogue, references to the Socratic body are few and exclusively limited to the legs. In 60b, Socrates rubs his legs to relieve them from the feeling of numbness after the warden releases him from the fetters. The symbolism of the scene is not lost on the readers, who, as they lay eyes on Socrates for the first time in the prison through Phaedo's narration, see him commenting with remarkable detachment on the deceptive nature of bodily pleasure, which is never 'pure' but always mixed with pain. Then, in 61d, we watch Socrates place his legs firmly on the ground as he commences the dialogue with Cebes and Simmias on the immortality of the soul. The legs remain fixed on the ground throughout the discussion, again a symbol of Socrates' return, as it were, to the physical and the sensible. Finally, in 117e, it is again from his legs that the numbness and paralysis of death start.[60]

The proposed interpretation of the Socratic body in symbolic terms, as the concrete representation of Socrates' exceptionally brave and temperate soul, is also anchored in the use of certain words in the death scene in relation to the body, which earlier in the dialogue were used in metaphysical contexts. On this view, the verbs *haptomai* and *ephaptomai* play a prominent role. The verb *haptomai* has a variety of meanings that stretch from the literal – 'to fasten oneself to', 'grasp', 'take hold of' – to the metaphorical – 'to engage in', 'undertake', or 'to have intercourse with a woman'.[61] The use of the verb *ephaptomai* extends the semantics of mere 'touch' from the literal 'bind on/to' and 'lay hold

59 See *Phd.* 89a5-7: ἔπειτα ὡς *εὖ ἡμᾶς ἰάσατο* καὶ ὥσπερ πεφευγότας καὶ ἡττημένους ἀνεκαλέσατο καὶ προύτρεψεν πρὸς τὸ παρέπεσθαί τε καὶ συσκοπεῖν τὸν λόγον.

60 As noted by Burger (1984) 15; Dorter (1982) 178; Gilead (1994) 45.

61 ἅπτω και ἅπτομαι: LSJ s.v. A III. 3,4 and 5. ἐφάπτομαι LSJ s.v. A II; Rowe (1993).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

of', to the metaphorical 'reach with the mind' and 'attain to'.[62] As seen above, both verbs are used in literal terms in the death scene in order to refer to the touching and strong holding of the Socratic body. Nonetheless, Socrates had exclusively used both verbs earlier in the epistemological and metaphysical contexts of the *Phaedo* to describe the ontological rapport of the disembodied soul to the Forms.[63] In line with my interpretation, the death scene does not merely present in vivid visual terms the soul's separation from the body, but reaffirms what was the case from the beginning of the dialogue, Plato's portrayal of Socrates as someone who *is his soul*, who has successfully kept the somatic and the psychic parts separate due to his practice of philosophy, as someone who regards his own body from afar as an onlooker, from the vantage point of a third party, from the ontologically advanced perspective of his true self. Hence, the embodied Socrates of the *Phaedo* is the concrete image of his 'pure' soul (καθαρὰ ψυχή).[64]

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62 For the epistemological use of ἐφάπτομαι and its connection to the soul, see *Phd*. 79c8: [ἡ ψυχὴ] τότε μὲν ἕλκεται ὑπὸ τοῦ σώματος εἰς τὰ οὐδέποτε κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχοντα, καὶ αὐτὴ πλανᾶται καὶ ταράττεται καὶ εἰλιγγιᾷ ὥσπερ μεθύουσα, ἅτε τοιούτων *ἐφαπτομένη*; 79d6: ὅτανπερ αὐτὴ καθ᾽ αὑτὴν γένηται καὶ ἐξῇ αὐτῇ, καὶ πέπαυταί τε τοῦ πλάνου καὶ περὶ ἐκεῖνα ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὡσαύτως ἔχει, ἅτε τοιούτων *ἐφαπτομένη*: Cf. 65d: ἀλλ᾽ ἄλλῃ τινὶ αἰσθήσει τῶν διὰ τοῦ σώματος ἐφήψω αὐτῶν; [τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἀγαθόν], 117e6: καὶ ἅμα *ἐφαπτόμενος* αὐτοῦ οὗτος ὁ δοὺς τὸ φάρμακον. With regard to *ἅπτομαι*, see 65b9: ἡ ψυχὴ τῆς ἀληθείας *ἅπτεται*, 65c5: λογίζεται [ἡ ψυχὴ] δέ γέ που τότε κάλλιστα, ὅταν αὐτὴν τούτων μηδὲν παραλυπῇ, μήτε ἀκοὴ μήτε ὄψις μήτε ἀλγηδὼν μηδέ τις ἡδονή, ἀλλ᾽ ὅτι μάλιστα αὐτὴ καθ᾽ αὑτὴν γίγνηται ἐῶσα χαίρειν τὸ σῶμα, καὶ καθ᾽ ὅσον δύναται μὴ κοινωνοῦσα αὐτῷ μηδ᾽ *ἁπτομένη* ὀρέγηται τοῦ ὄντος. See also: 86d8, 65c9, 75a7. Cf. 79a1, 81b5, 108b5. The verb *ἅπτομαι* in the dialogues also has erotic connotations, which Plato uses in reference to the soul's reckoning of the Forms. See *Ti*. 90b6-d7, *Resp*. 490a8-b7, *Symp*. 209c: *ἁπτόμενος* γὰρ οἶμαι τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ ὁμιλῶν αὐτῷ, ἃ πάλαι ἐκύει τίκτει καὶ γεννᾷ, καὶ παρὼν καὶ ἀπὼν μεμνημένος, καὶ τὸ γεννηθὲν συνεκτρέφει κοινῇ μετ᾽ ἐκείνου. The verb *ἐφάπτομαι* also has similar semantics. See *Phdr*. 253a2, *Tht*. 190d, *Soph*. 234d5 and 259d6, *Phlb*. 35c. Cf. *Symp*. 212a; *Resp*. 534c6.

63 See *Phd*. 78b-84c; Gallop (1975) 137–146; White (1989) 116–125.

64 The significance that the themes of purity (κάθαρσις) and purification (καθαρεύειν) have for the portrayal of Socrates has been noted by the majority of the dialogue's interpreters. Not all agree, though, on how this 'purification' unfolds in the text. I concur with Kahn (1996) 331: 'It is the noble courage and argumentative mastery of Socrates in the face of death that give credibility to the transcendental conception of the soul and its grounding in the reality of the Forms'. See Rowe's comment on *euphemia* in 117e1-2, which associates him more with the gods than with the mortals; Gilead (1994) 42; Burger (1984) 216, argues that Socrates 'experiences a union of opposites at his release from life'. Romero (2016) sees in the death of Socrates 'the full unfolding of a sacrificial ritual' as well as a strong connection to Greek tragedy (51–72, esp. 72). Gilead (1994) 39 compares 'Phaedo's drama' to Homer and argues that in the *Phaedo* we meet a new dramatic hero who has all the intellectual and moral virtues: continence, heroism, wisdom.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

In conclusion, in contrast to the dialogue's internal audiences, the readers can assume a panoramic interpretational view that allows them to identify behind Socrates' detachment from his somatic constituent the formative impact of the intelligible world on his soul. While the internal audience clings to the Socratic body, as their last resort, watching breathlessly what they perceive as the soul's departure from the body, the readers are invited to emotionally recreate Socrates' brave, balanced, and detached point of view of the scene. They are prompted, that is, to become, like Socrates, onlookers to his own death, for they are privileged when compared to the eyewitnesses in two crucial respects: firstly, Socrates' *hapax* physical demise presented at the end of the dialogue can be defeated by the continuous revival of his verbal representation activated by the very act of reading; secondly, and most importantly, the act of reading can enhance their grasp of the Socratic *persona* as personifying in the text one's successful transition from the purely somatic to the intellectual, the soul's privileged relation to the Forms, and the value of a life spent in philosophy.

It is in this regard that the readers can embark on a journey from the somatic/physical to the intellectual. They are urged, in other words, to progress from the Socratic body to the Socratic soul and from there to the notion of the disembodied soul at large.[65] The vigorous philosophical discourse as presented in the *Phaedo* guides the ascent. For the internal audience, however, the touching of the Socratic body, while it loses its sensation, does not differ much from Alcibiades' hollow embrace of Socrates in the *Symposium*. In both instances, Plato presents the body of Socrates as deflecting the human touch by steadily remaining unaffected, tranquil and aloof. On this view, the numbness of the final death scene is the apogee of Socrates' heroic comportment exemplified throughout the dialogue. And yet, while the *Phaedo*'s opening scene celebrates the victory of the continuous resurrection of *logos* over the death of the particular individual, its ending favours us with what we as readers may also deep down desire: a final 'touch' of Socrates' body on the deathbed as he leaves us behind in the sensible world, struggling with the mundane.

65 In *Phd.* 89d Socrates compares the philosophical *logoi* to people and defends the priority of the universal power of philosophical discourse to the influence of the particular thinker. See *Phd.* 89d: μὴ γενώμεθα, ἦ δ' ὅς, μισόλογοι, ὥσπερ οἱ μισάνθρωποι γιγνόμενοι· ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν, ἔφη, *ὅτι ἄν τις μεῖζον τούτου κακὸν πάθοι ἢ λόγους μισήσας*. See Balla (2019).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

CHAPTER 11

The Necessity of Writing

The Introduction of Plato's Theaetetus

Antonis Tsakmakis

1 Introduction*

'The lecture left me convinced that in the *Theaetetus* I had found a work of philosophy which would reward a lifetime's study'. Thus describes one of the most prolific students of Plato's dialogue, Myles Burnyeat, his own reaction, early in his career, to a lecture on *Theaetetus* by Bernard Williams.[1] Intensive scholarly work on the *Theaetetus* in the last decades[2] is a sign of the dialogue's attractiveness to relatively few, but devoted specialists; inversely, the dialogue is less well-known to most of Plato's amateur readers. This is mainly a consequence of the work's demanding subject matter, the definition of knowledge – 'not knowledge in general, but the specific wisdom proper of the true philosopher'.[3] The present chapter suggests that the dialogue's 'exclusiveness', the appeal of the *Theaetetus* to a select audience, is not only premeditated but also is meticulously signaled in the text, especially in the opening of the dialogue, a section which only recently has attracted the interest of scholars.[4]

* I thank Panagiotis Thanassas, Eleni Kaklamanou, Evangelia Theodoroudi and Maria Pavlou for their comments, Angela Zerbe and Xenia Makri for improving my style. All mistakes remain my responsibility.

1 Burnyeat (1990) xiii. *Theaetetus* was treated as a 'star dialogue' already in antiquity; cf. Annas (1992) 60, 64; Bonazzi (2013) 309. On *Theaetetus* as a source of the epistemology of the Old Academy, see Dillon (2018) 44–45.

2 Starting with McDowell's (1973) commentary, almost thirty book-length studies or commentaries have appeared in the last forty five years, an impressive record which places *Theaetetus* among Plato's most studied dialogues.

3 Lisi (2011) vii.

4 McDowell (1973) dedicates no more than 20 lines to the first six *OCT* pages; Bostock's (1988) philosophical discussion of the dialogue starts on its fifteenth page (151e); Roloff (1975) equally ignores the opening, as do Desjardins (1990) and others. *Contra* Polansky (1992) 34; the frame of the dialogue is also properly discussed in the commentaries of Benardete (1984) and, to a degree, Chappell (2004). It is the focus of Solère-Queval (1998); Tschemplik (2008) 16–27; Narcy (2013); Giannopoulou (2013) 20–29; Giannopoulou (2014); Capuccino (2014) 102–191 (with further literature); Balansard (2015); Kaklamanou & Pavlou (2016).

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Furthermore, contextual analysis will lead us to a supposition concerning the conditions under which the work has been composed and which may be related to some of its particularities.

The variety, sophistication and demonstrative prominence of framing features in the *Theaetetus* stands out in the Platonic corpus. The dialogue has both an extensive outer frame (opening scene between persons other than the participants of the main dialogue, which takes place later than the dialogue), and a developed 'inner frame', i.e. a preliminary conversation between Socrates and his interlocutors before the philosophical discussion proper begins. But it is only in the *Theaetetus* that both these framing sections have the form of uninterrupted dialogue, and this is also the case in the main part of the dialogue – also a unique combination. Moreover, the dramatic form of the dialogue is presented in the proem as a conscious choice of the narrator, and we also learn that the dialogue is available to the participants in written form; indeed, Socrates himself was actively involved in the process of its composition. The foregrounded motifs of writing and of the reproduction of a past reality by literary means in the dramatic mode of representation evoke memorable Platonic positions presented in earlier (according to the prevailing view) dialogues, namely the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic*. It is also to be noted that hints and parallels to other dialogues are not limited to these salient themes,[5] while meta-philosophical reflection is further enhanced by Socrates' articulate presentation of his method as midwifery in a famous passage of his introductory conversation with Theaetetus – the corollary of a series of comments on the participants' character and personality to be found in this section.[6] Finally, at the end of the dialogue, the continuation of the discussion between the same persons is announced and this promise is eventually fulfilled in the *Sophist* (which is itself followed by the *Statesman*).[7]

It is a legitimate hypothesis that these subtleties of the *Theaetetus*' framing parts have significance for the dialogue in its entirety. Also, it is worth considering whether there is a connection with another peculiarity of this dialogue, namely that, unlike dialogues of Plato's middle period, positive conclusions are avoided and many questions are left open, although they have been extensively and seriously discussed. Like Plato's earlier dialogues the *Theaetetus* is ultimately aporetic regarding its principal definitional question, namely 'what

5 Giannopoulou (2013) argues that *Theaetetus* includes sufficient elements that justify a parallelism with the *Apology* (and hence can be read as an account-giving of Socrates).

6 See especially Blondell (2002) 251–313.

7 210d; cf. *Soph.* 216a. On the relationship between *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*, see Brisson (2011) 98.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

is knowledge'.[8] But in contrast to these dialogues, Socrates does not expose his interlocutors. The pursuit of truth in the dialogue is a serious, collaborative and intensive project, although it is still incomplete.[9] The failure to reach a conclusion does not lead to a permanent end of the discussion; it rather serves as a better starting point for ensuing attempts. It has been pointed out that this may be an appeal addressed not only to the persons involved in the dialogue, but also to its external audience(s).[10]

The hypothesis developed in this chapter is that the dialogue was originally and primarily addressed to persons who were familiar with Plato's thought

8 Cf. Benardete (1984) 1.87: 'In light of the question it raises, the *Theaetetus* is more comprehensively skeptical than any other so-called skeptical dialogue'. On the other hand, Brown (2018) links *aporia* in this dialogue to the motif of Socrates' midwifery: 'with the powerful midwife image, Plato has introduced a new conception of subjective *aporia* as the labour pains of one who is "pregnant" with some theory or other, and who needs the help of a Socratic midwife to deliver it fully – arguably a more appealing notion of intellectual difficulty and of the role of Socrates than "elenctic *aporia*", the perplexity of one who has been humbled by Socrates' cross-examination' (95). Zilioli (2012) 51–52 reminds that in antiquity the dialogue was understood as a peirastic one, not as maieutic (Diog. Laert. 3.49–51). Johnson (1998) points out that all Platonic proems 'warn against the notion that have ultimate authority, and to insist upon changeable pursuit of truth embodied in the process of dialectic' (590).

9 Lafrance (2015) 213 stresses the positive conclusions of the conversation arguing, among other things, that the failure mainly concerns the impossibility of explaining false belief, while D. Frede (1989) argues that the dialogue includes hints for possible answers to open questions. Cf. also Polansky (1992); Sedley (2004) 5.

10 Cf. Benardete (1984) 1.88; Heitsch (1988); Burnyeat (1990); Sedley (1996) 103 (on sources of this approach in antiquity); Sedley (2004); Gill (2012); Kahn (2013) 51–52 (on Plato presupposing the reader's knowledge of earlier dialogues); *contra* Brisson (2011) 89. On readerly responses cued by the Platonic text, see Cotton (2014), esp. 85 (Theaetetus as a model for the recipient of philosophical instruction); 140–141; 152–154 (on the 'importance of inconsistencies and ellipses, both within individual dialogues and between dialogues, and the work left for the reader to do'); 263–270 (on the reader's 'progress'). Szlezák (1999) 118 also points out, for different reasons, the constructive effect of dialogues on its primary addressees. It is also to be noted that Plato's target audience in his middle period seems to change. While many of Plato's early dialogues are believed to address a wider public, dialogues of his middle period represent 'a different notion of philosophical writing corresponding to a different choice of the audience for whom the dialogues are intended. And this rhetorical shift on the author's part is reflected within the dialogues by his selection and characterisation of the interlocutors. Phaedrus is perhaps the last non-philosopher to appear as a dialogue speaker until we reach Plato's latest and most "practical" work, the *Laws*': Kahn (1996) 380–381; cf. also 58–59 and Rutherford (1995) 275–6; after the *Phaedrus* 'Plato can deploy rigorous argument and elaborate technical method, because he has interlocutors whose interests are genuinely philosophical' (Kahn [1996] 381). This is regularly understood as a sign that Plato's intended audience are not interested people who have no previous experience with philosophy, but a circle of men who are already familiar with philosophical thinking.

and work and were probably associated with the Academy. It was intended to provide a paradigm of rigid debate and a basis for further philosophical inquiry. As scholars still discuss whether the views expressed in the dialogue are in alignment with the Theory of Forms expounded by Plato in previous dialogues, we suggest that *Theaetetus* could also inspire further investigation by its original audience into this matter and into a series of questions touched upon in the dialogue. In Section 2 we argue that many notable features of the dialogue's frames cohere with the hypothesis that this work was conceived as a text to be studied in the absence of its author.[11] This reading neither denies that the study of other dialogues did not require the presence of Plato, nor ignores that Platonic writing resists definite interpretations; our aim is rather to improve the understanding of the text by uncovering the semantic potential of its textual features through a systematic literary analysis; accordingly, special attention will be given to the cognitive and emotional responses the frames were likely to generate in their original audiences (Section 3). Given that the *Theaetetus* is usually dated to the years after 370, i.e. shortly before or during Plato's second visit to Sicily (367), it is an attractive hypothesis that the philosopher's departure from Athens may be correlated to some of its peculiarities, as well as to the self-conscious reflection about writing, dialogue and imitation against the backdrop of Plato's earlier dialogues (Section 4). It is needless to add that reflections about the dialogue's possible 'Sitz im Leben', do not exhaust its interpretation in a historicist approach.

2 The Frames of the *Theaetetus* and the Idea of Plato's Absence

In the outer frame of the dialogue (142a-143e) Euclides and Terpsion meet on a summer afternoon in their hometown Megara, and Euclides asks his companion about the time he had returned 'from the fields' – 'just now' or 'longer ago'. Terpsion answers that he has been searching for Euclides in the agora for a long time (142a), and, in reply, Euclides gives a full account of his extraordinary day to explain his prolonged absence from the city. He had met Theaetetus in

11 We cannot know whether earlier dialogues were recited and discussed in the presence of Plato, nor how the philosopher commented himself on his own writings as a part of his teaching. Cf. Sayre (1992) 223–226; Charalabopoulos (2012) 140–154. *Theaetetus* is commonly believed to mark the transition from Plato's middle period to the so-called late dialogues (thus it comes after the *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, and *Parmenides*); cf. Lafrance (2015) 198 n. 3, despite doubts caused occasionally by stylometric data; cf. Ledger (1989); Brandwood (1990).

the port as the latter was returning from a battle in Corinth,[12] gravely wounded and suffering from a fatal illness; the mathematician wanted to be carried to Athens, because he preferred to die in his homeland. In order to enjoy Theaetetus' company as long as he could, Euclides accompanied him on a large part of the route to Athens. On his way back, Euclides continues, he recollected a remarkable conversation between Socrates and the then young Theaetetus, which took place shortly before Socrates' death.[13] Socrates was so impressed by Theaetetus' character and skills, that he foretold that the teenager would become a learned and judicious man, provided that he reached maturity (142a-d; the comment is not repeated in the main dialogue, but see 210b-d). Thus, the two friends agree to listen to the conversation, as Euclides reminds that he had produced a written record of the full dialogue, based on Socrates' narration (142d-143a). A servant is asked to recite the text (which must have been kept at the place the two men have reached meanwhile – distances in Megara are not comparable to those at Athens). Euclides now adds that, in a final revision, he removed all intermediate phrases by the narrator, 'to avoid disruption' (143b-c).

The dialogue proper arises from a conversation between Socrates and the mathematician Theodorus of Cyrene, which probably took place in a gymnasium. In its introduction (143d-151d), Socrates expresses the desire to learn whether Theodorus happened to have got acquainted with any outstanding Athenian youths during his stay in Athens (143d-e). Theodorus points to a young boy who had just oiled his body before exercise (as it turns out, the boy will eventually engage in a philosophical discussion). While Theaetetus remains at a distance, we are informed about his family, character and outstanding mental skills, and finally his name is disclosed. Theodorus praises the boy's unusual ability to learn without the least sign of uneasiness, and concludes by noticing his external similarity to Socrates (143e-144d). Thus, Socrates takes the opportunity to address Theaetetus in a playful way: he asks him to approach in order to examine how he looks like himself. This leads to a discussion about (external) similarity, as well as about the expertise needed to attest it; this topic will then generate the question whether the two men's souls are equally

12 Earlier scholars identified this event with a battle dated to 369 B.C., a year close to the probable date of the dialogue's composition; for a recent support of this view, see Garcia Xavier (2011) 73–77. But this would mean that Theaetetus served as a hoplite in his mid-forties, while Euclides would have walked from Megara to Erinos and back (a total of 30 km) as an 81-year-old man. Consequently, the battle of Corinthus in the Corinthian War in the spring of 391 has been suggested as the most probable date; cf. Nails (2002) 274–278, with further arguments – all are reasonable but not compelling.

13 Later this day Socrates had to appear at the *basileios stoa* to answer to Meletus' charges of corrupting the young – but this information is not revealed until the end (210d).

similar, and so the examination of Theaetetus' soul by Socrates will provide the occasion for a philosophical discussion (144d-147c).[14] The themes of knowing, recognising, remembering and forgetting figure prominently in this exchange, as well as their usual objects: names, appearance, qualities and identity. Finally, Socrates compares his own role with that of a midwife: he does not offer himself any knowledge, but he helps others to bring their ideas to light and examines their feasibility (149a-151d). Theaetetus proves to be a smart and congenial partner in conversation and, having displayed his own achievements in mathematics, he is encouraged by Socrates to attempt to define knowledge (147c-148d).

The persons involved in the framing scene, together with those participating in the main dialogue and whose names are also disclosed there, provide a first indication that the world of *Theaetetus* is a philosophers-only universe.[15] Euclides was known as a follower of Socrates who, after Socrates' death, taught

14 Knowledge of individual persons and objects is a recurrent motif in the main dialogue (esp. on persons: 188b, 192e-193a, 193b); cf. Lafrance (2015) 214.

15 Fritz (2016) 149. It is true that, like other figures of Platonic proems, Euclides and Terpsion do not actively engage in a philosophical discussion (cf. Johnson [1998] 590), but this does not justify their negative evaluation (common in numerous discussions of the passage). On the contrary, the language they use echoes the Platonic vocabulary of philosophical investigation and announces specific problems to be treated in this dialogue. In the opening exchange the idea of coming together is blended with the notion of philosophising: Terpsion had been searching for Euclides (ἐζήτουν) and was full of wonder (ἐθαύμαζον), because he was not able to find him anywhere (εὑρεῖν); on ζητεῖν/εὑρίσκειν in Plato cf. Giannantoni (2005) 207–208, on θαῦμα/θαυμάζειν etc. Tschemplik (2008) 56–57; see also 144a-b, 155d etc. Pappas (2016) 26 notes that besides θαυμάζω also the noun ἀγορά will play a role in the work (155d, 173c). This language may suggest attractive allegories, as there are some analogies with the philosophical inquiry that follows: Terpsion's first attempt to find Euclides was fruitless, as he was not where Terpsion first hypothesised, but Terpsion, instead of giving up, kept on searching – a procedure with analogies to Theaetetus' consecutive attemtps to find a definition for knowledge. Further on, Euclides' repeated walks to Athens and back is a movement (κίνησις) that illustrates his zeal and effort to achieve something, but it can also be seen as a hint to intellectual progress, as in 153b learning and studying (μάθησις, μελέτη) are defined as forms of κίνησις. Euclides' account about his meeting with Theaetetus also contains some significant notions: he met Theaetetus by chance (ἐνέτυχον: on the use of the verb in other proems, see Rangos in this volume), as the Athenian was being carried (φερομένῳ) from Corinth to his destination (φέρεσθαι is applied in the first part of the dialogue to the beings which are examined as possible objects of knowledge, 152dff.). In a similar vein, in the preliminary conversation of Socrates with Theodorus and Theaetetus the verbs ἀκούω, μέμνημαι, γιγνώσκω, οἶδα as well as topics such as names, external appearance, identity etc. point to the content of the dialogue and prefigure its complexities (Theodorus retrieves Theaetetus' name in his second attempt – when he was first asked he could not remember; but 'knowing' him was still possible).

philosophy in Megara.[16] The dates of his birth and death are uncertain, but he is supposed to have been quite older than Plato. He must have been alive at least between 430 (or even 450) and 380. He wrote six Socratic dialogues (Diog. Laert. 2.106). Terpsion was probably a lesser figure of Euclides' environment – a pupil or follower of his. Socrates' interlocutors in the main dialogue, Theodorus (from Cyrene) and Theaetetus of Sounion, were not philosophers in the narrow sense; they were renowned mathematicians,[17] but for Plato the study of mathematics was a prerequisite for the preoccupation with philosophy.

For readers and audiences familiar with Plato, Euclides' figure in the opening of *Theaetetus* evokes in many ways the Megarian's multifaceted relationship to Plato and it also suggests a number of significant analogies between the two men. Both the older Megarian and the younger Athenian, shared a common past as devoted members of Socrates' circle. After Socrates' death, Plato left Athens and Euclides was the person who hosted him in Megara,[18] and we may assume that Plato had feelings of respect, solidarity and gratitude towards his older Megarian friend. By teaching philosophy and by writing Socratic dialogues Euclides had paved the way to be followed by Plato (in case the dramatic date of the dialogue's opening scene is 391, that means that by that time Euclides was active in Megara, while Plato had not yet founded his school; it is also probable that Euclides had already composed some of his dialogues).

Euclides' teaching activity is perhaps reflected in the *Theaetetus*. The recitation of the dialogue almost certainly took place in the regular meeting place of Euclides and his followers (perhaps in Euclides' house or school, if there was any – possibly a place associated with Plato's sojourn in the town).[19] The

16 Euclides combined Eleatic monism with Socratic ethics. He believed in the existence of one Good, which is absolute and immobile; its opposite does not exist (a Parmenidean doctrine); each virtue or wisdom (φρόνησις) is treated as a name of the ἕν, which remains always the same (a Socratic component). Megarians denied motion (a salient motif in the first part of the *Theaetetus*). Cf. Stern (2008) 21–22; Zucker (2009) 600–601.

17 On Theodorus, see Nails (2002) 281–282; on Theaetetus, Nails (2002) 274–278 and (2016) 300–306.

18 According to Diogenes Laertius 2.106, 3.6 (who names Hermodorus as his source), after the execution of Socrates, Plato and other members of Socrates' circle established themselves in Megara. Their host was probably Euclides; cf. Döring (1972) 73 f.; Reale (1987) 281–285; Dillon (2003) 199.

19 The adhortative ἴωμεν indicates a change of place in the end of the scene; the two friends move, to the place where the manuscript was kept and probably sit in the garden. It would be unreasonable to assume that Euclides had the manuscript with him on his visit to the harbour; it is also contradicted by his remark that the conversation 'came to his mind' during his return (142c). There is no attested meeting place of a philosophical school in Megara at any time, but Euclides' teaching activity seems anyway beyond serious doubt; cf. Haake (2018) 241–243.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

association with Plato would be undoubtedly stronger for those who had similar experiences in Plato's Academy.[20]

The setting is also significant. Megara is one of the places where Socrates could have found a refuge, had he followed Criton's advice and escaped from prison (*Crit.* 53b4-5). Thus, Megara appeared as an alternative to Athens, a place where Socrates could have continued his life. Theaetetus was also given the choice to stay in Megara (which could possibly have delayed his passing away), but his answer was comparable to that of Socrates: he wished to die in Athens (142c2-3). If in this way Athens is associated with the philosophers' end,[21] Megara is the city which, during their life was always ready to receive them; now it preserves their memory.

Furthermore, in order to write down the dialogue between Socrates and Theaetetus as faithfully as possible,[22] Euclides came several times from Megara to Athens to visit Socrates before the philosopher's imminent death. Euclides commuted on the road not taken by Socrates and transferred to Megara the information he needed to compose his work. After Socrates' death (though perhaps not immediately),[23] i.e. not long after the dramatic date of the dialogue and the alleged composition of Euclides' text, the real author of the dialogue, Plato, covered the same route as he abandoned Athens in order to establish himself in this hospitable town. This biographical detail may explain the positive way Megara is treated in Plato's dialogues. In any case, the motif of moving to Megara evokes Plato's bonds with this place, and especially his decision to live there instead of Athens, enacts the reader's knowledge of Plato's departure from Athens.

In a similar manner, Euclides' claim to be the author of the dialogue, challenges – and therefore evokes – the reader's knowledge that Plato is its real author. In sum, for readers who knew Plato, several outstanding motifs of the outer frame's setting extending to the full range of its fundamental elements, namely persons, space, time and actions were likely to produce associations with the philosopher's life; more specifically, the combination of all these

20 Readers would have associated this scene with Plato's κῆπος, where such events used to take place; on the κῆπος, see Diog. Laert. 3.5; Dillon (2003) 3–4; Caruso (2013) 61 (with the sources), 100–104, 193. Pappas (2016) treats *Theaetetus* as a work to be read against the backdrop of the institutionalisation of philosophy in the Academy.

21 Their decision is an expression of devotion to their city, in alignment with their ethical principles, cf. Polanski (1992) 35–36; McCoy (2008) 143: 'Socrates … is both an insider and an outsider in Athens … On the other hand, Socrates is deeply committed to Athens'.

22 For the symbolic interpretation of movement in Plato (especially in the *Republic*) cf. De Sanctis (2016) 122–128; Schur (2015) 59–80.

23 Nails (2002) 247.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

motifs would possibly call to the readers' mind Plato's move away from Athens while, at the same time, they foreground the idea of Socratic dialogues being composed outside Athens. It is also to be noted that, again, in the early 360s, the time *Theaetetus* is usually dated, Plato had left Athens again, as he travelled to Syracuse, where he intended to encourage the introduction of a regime based on philosophical principles. Thus, real life experiences of the dialogue's first audiences would further advance these associations.

This impression is reinforced by Socrates' first utterance in the dialogue, where he explicitly mentions Cyrene (143d1-6). It is attested (although the evidence is not compelling) that at some time after his return to Athens from his first retreat, at a period which is close to the dramatic date of the opening scene and Theaetetus' death (presumably 391), Plato once more left Athens and travelled to Egypt, Cyrene and Sicily.[24] According to Diogenes Laertius 3.6, his host in Cyrene was Theodorus, Socrates' first interlocutor in the inner frame of the dialogue; this means that, if there is some truth in this story, both framing conversations of the *Theaetetus* include a person associated with Plato's sojourns outside Athens.[25]

The idea of an absent Plato is suggested in one more way. Apart from Euclides' personal friendship with Plato, Euclides and Terpsion are known to Plato's readers from the *Phaedo*: they were present at Socrates' last conversation (59b-c). A reader familiar with Plato's writings is supposed to have made this association between the two dialogues' proems.[26] An artful literary strategy forces readers to direct their attention to *Phaedo* and make active use of their knowledge of it: while Terpsion is addressed by his interlocutor right from the

24 Plutarch (*Sol.* 2.8) states that Plato sailed from Athens as a merchant, transporting oil to Egypt. It would be tempting to relate the image of flowing oil, which is used as a metaphor for Theaetetus' character in the introduction (144b), to this detail, which must have been known to Plato's contemporaries. On possible allusions to Cyrenaic philosophy in the dialogue, see Zilioli (2012) 47–71; Rowe (2015). Zilioli (2012) 63 believes that the Cyrenaics are not directly referred to because they had not elaborated their doctrines before Socrates' death. Personal motives may also play a role, as Plato usually avoids mentioning his rivals; cf. Tsouna (2015) 18.

25 The marked opposition between Socrates' interest in the youth of Athens and his indifference to those of Cyrene (143d) refutes, of course, *prima facie*, the accusation of corrupting the youth (at Athens); cf. Fritz (2016) 148. To Plato's contemporaries, however, it must have sounded ironic, as they knew that Plato probably visited Cyrene in his quest for philosophical contacts outside Athens, and, certainly also because they realised that most members of the Academy came from cities other than Athens.

26 These two dialogues frame the seven dialogues which date to around Socrates' death (*Theaetetus*, *Euthyphro*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo*), for a possible interpretation cf. Polanski (1992) 34-35l; see also Fritz (2016) 154.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

beginning of the proem (142a1), and his name is repeated two more times in it (142b7, 143b5), the reader has to wait until Terpsion's last turn in this exchange (143c7) for Euclides' identity to be disclosed. It is likely that this suspense induces Plato's readers to hypothesise the identity of Terpsion's unnamed partner; thus, they are encouraged to evoke the opening of the *Phaedo* and consider the possibility that the same Euclides is Terpsion's companion in the present case, too. The activation of the reader's knowledge of the opening of *Phaedo* had a further upshot. The names of the two Megarians had appeared there in the same context with Plato's. According to the narrator, namely Phaedo, Plato was not present at Socrates' last hours because, as Phaedo 'thought', he had been ill. Thus, through the reminiscence of *Phaedo*, the association between Plato and Euclides is also implicitly connected to the idea of Plato's absence (in this case not from Athens, but from the scene).

Overall, several details of the proem make better sense if we assume that a playful association with real life circumstances was intended or exploited. In the following section we discuss in more detail the way a reader processes the opening parts as the conversation evolves.

3 Plato Dramaticus and His Audience: Reading *Theaetetus* from the Beginning

3.1 *The Outer Frame*

Theaetetus occupies an intermediate position between Plato's dramatic and narrated dialogues.[27] Despite its dramatic form, the dialogue is in a sense reported, as we do not ignore that its transmission required two intermediaries, Socrates himself and Euclides. In contrast, however, to the *Parmenides* and the *Symposion*,[28] this dependence on intermediary narrators does not undermine the idea of authenticity, but rather emboldens it through a mark of authority.[29]

27 Plato's narrated dialogues are always framed, either by a dialogue or by a monologic exposition of the speaker to an audience (which is not identified and remains 'invisible'). Narrated dialogues with a dialogic frame: *Euthydemus*, *Menexenus*, *Protagoras* (narrator is Socrates); *Phaedo*, *Symposion* (narrator other than Socrates). Narrated dialogues with a monologic frame: *Lysis*, *Charmides*, *Republic* (narrator is Socrates); *Parmenides* (narrator other than Socrates).

28 Plato's absence from *Phaedo* may be seen as a hint to the fictional character of the dialogue: *Phaedo* is not a first-hand testimony, but a product of Plato's creative imagination. On Platonic narrators whose authority is undermined cf. Clay (1992) 117.

29 The use of an intermediary – a narrator – does not undermine *per se* credibility; it points to the impossibility of accurate reproduction but, at the same time, implies an attempt to preserve what is essentially true.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Dramatic dialogues create an illusion of spontaneity, immediacy and vividness.[30] The absence of a controlling authorial voice and the ensuing lack of a (traceable) external focaliser (a device that triggers a clear distinction in the mind between the reality of the addressee and the fictional setting), minimise the reader's distance from the fictitious speakers. The aesthetic experience generated by such a dialogue involves empathy and suspense caused by the reader's direct exposure to the vicissitudes of the interaction between the *dialogi personae*; external and internal audiences have the same listening perceptions.

In the opening scene of the *Theaetetus*, Euclides and Terpsion are talking with nostalgia about two respected figures who are dead: Theaetetus and Socrates. In an artful and efficient manner, the dialogue creates suspense and triggers empathy in the reader, who tends to adopt the same perspective as Euclides' internal audience, Terpsion. As the conversation advances, positive and negative feelings alternate or coexist. Initially, the reader's curiosity to learn about the dying Theaetetus is triggered; readers are expected to share the interlocutors' admiration for Theaetetus' courage in battle, and to experience a certain frustration, realising that he could have survived had he not been concurrently affected by dysentery.[31] What is anticipated about the main dialogue generates similarly fluctuating responses. Feelings of gloom and desire prompted by the reminiscence of Socrates' death are mitigated by the reference to his optimistic prophecy about Theaetetus' future development. This feeling is destabilised by the knowledge of Theaetetus' premature death – but,

30 Dramatic dialogues either focus without delay on the main topic (*Laches*, *Alcibiades* I, *Meno*, *Hippias minor*, *Alcibiades* II, *Hipparchus*, *Theages*, *Minos* and, later, *Laws*) or open with a short, preliminary exchange which, like the prologue in drama, contains essential information on the persons, setting and further circumstances of the conversation (*Euthyphro*, *Crito*, *Gorgias*, *Ion*, *Phaedrus*; *Hippias maior*: very brief exchange; the same model would be followed later in the *Sophist*, *Statesman* and *Timaeus*). In the latter case, the transition to the main part of the dialogue is smooth, since there is no change of external setting, unless the interlocutors are themselves moving. From early or dubious dialogues only *Anterastae* is narrated by Socrates. In *Cratylus*, which belongs to the middle period, as well as in the later *Philebus*, the interlocutors recapitulate a discussion which is in progress for the better orientation of the newly arrived Socrates; in *Timaeus* it is Socrates who recapitulates a discussion of the previous day.

31 Cornelli and Carvalho (2011) 101 see the reference to the dysentery as a comic element (together with Plato's 'concealment', the allusions to Socrates' ugliness, the anecdote of the laughing Thracian maiden, and the excursus on the philosopher in the agora); cf. also Charalabopoulos (2012) 208. On further comic elements in 144a-b, see Tschemplik (2008) 25. Humorous details contribute to the complexity of responses triggered by the text. Erler (2016) 114 argues that the dramatic form of the dialogue makes it more entertaining.

again, this does not entail a hopeless situation: the dialogue that follows preserves the memory and the ideas of both men. It prolongs their presence, not only among Euclides and Terpsion, but also among readers. Moreover, the announcement of a dialogue which keeps unaltered the authentic, dramatic form of uninterrupted direct speech promises lively resonances of the way they spoke and behaved.

Nevertheless, audiences can never deactivate the contextual knowledge that reminds them that they belong to a different reality. The speakers of Plato's dramatic dialogues are situated in a different temporal and local setting than the reader. They are classified as real persons (and not as mythical or fictional figures, like the persons in drama), but they are almost certainly dead at the time of the dialogue's publication.[32] In extreme cases individual elements of the setting are incompatible with each other from a historical point of view, reinforcing thus the impression of fictionality.[33] In consequence, the contextual information generated or imported in the course of the dialogue is directly confronted with the real world context of the reader, and this experience automatically triggers the awareness of fictitiousness.[34] On the whole, the immersion of the reader or listener into the 'reality' of the dialogue, intensified through the direct discourse and the unboundedness of the dialogue, maximises the collision force that is produced by the tension between the different contexts (reader's world vs. setting of the dialogue).[35]

Compared to other Platonic dialogues, it is remarkable that in the outer frame of the *Theaetetus*, disrupting effects cued by the contextual information

32 Capuccino (2014) 115–116.

33 On contextual information evoked within the main dialogue cf. Cotton (2014) 233–236, with interesting suggestions on possible interpretations of biographical hints.

34 Cf. Garcia Xavier (2011) 51, who underlines that the dramatic form makes the author less responsible for the views supported by the interlocutors, while, on the other hand, it indicates fiction. Contrast Xenophon's controlling presence at the opening of his 'Socratic' works (*Memorabilia*, *Apology*, *Symposion*, *Oeconomicus*); this stance suggests historicity, and it implies the narrator's authoritative commitment to the reality of his narration (even where this is not eventually the case). The narrator is unquestionably identified as the author himself.

35 Genre conventions are a further pragmatic constraint and provide additional contextual frames for the adequate processing of a text. Accordingly, the identity of Socrates as the central figure of Plato's works is constantly negotiated. He is at the same time the stock character of the genre of Socratic dialogue (cf. Kurke [2010] 252–253) – the literary version of a 'street philosopher', and a character who develops in the tradition according to various authors' creativity – and a figure indebted to the historical Socrates who is still remembered, a person whose way of life, captivating personality (especially manifested in conversation), and insights into human affairs deeply influenced Plato, other Socratic writers and many people who came into contact with him.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

which is retrieved are minimal (and, eventually, they all converge in the suggestion of Plato's absence from Athens, as we argued in the previous section). Spatial and temporal remoteness is suggested (scene outside Athens; Euclides and Terpsion supposed to be dead), but its effects are counterbalanced by a feeling of common identity with the interlocutors that is supposed to come up among Plato's intimates; this is the result of contextual knowledge from the real world which is activated while the proem is processed. As we pointed out, the persons involved in the scene, as well as the participants of the main dialogue (who are all named in the outer frame), evoke details from Plato's biography and writings, which are associated with intense positive emotions. Given that Plato's followers ideally were members of the same philosophical community, a feeling of in-group solidarity with the characters of the dialogue emerges. Consequently, readers with this profile are predisposed to listen to the dialogue in quite the same way as the internal audience. It follows that the two Megarians' desire to revive the memory of Socrates and Theaetetus can be transferred to the external audience without any inhibiting factors. In what could be called an emergent structure,[36] claims of authority and accuracy made by Euclides maintain their value to the maximum degree possible. Even though readers do not consider the dialogue to be historically accurate, Euclides' assertions are still interpreted as a sign that in this dialogue many elements can be trusted as if they were true.

The convergence of the internal and external audiences' perspective is not only an aesthetic phenomenon sustained by the subtleties of the proem but is further deployed throughout the dialogue in a way that increases the reader's benefit. The dialogue satisfies a desire to keep Socrates alive and creates the illusion of listening to his *ipsissima verba*. In addition, it entails hints that point to Socrates' succession. Shortly before his death, Socrates indirectly indicates that the young mathematician could follow, *mutatis mutandis*, the way he had paved. Plato's students of the Academy are heirs of the same tradition; they follow the same path and, therefore, feel particularly concerned by both the content of the dialogue and the performance of Socrates' interlocutor in it.

3.2 *The Inner Frame*

The importance of the figure of Theaetetus – not in a biographical sense, but in his function as an exemplary character – is indicated in a threefold way: through unrestricted praise, through the emphasis on the similarity

36 On the notion of emergent structure as a result of blending in the mind, see Fauconnier and Turner (2002).

between Socrates and Theaetetus,[37] and through his role in the dialogue itself (as well as in the *Sophist*). The exceptional treatment of Theaetetus first becomes evident when he – not Socrates – is identified as the primary object of the two Megarians' interest in the proem (the reason why the dialogue is reminisced).[38] Praise of Theaetetus is explicit, generous and dispersed throughout all parts of the dialogue. It concerns every aspect of his personality and is shared by everybody: the Megarians, the men who attested his bravery in battle, Theodorus and Socrates. His future excellence is anticipated by Socrates after his first acquaintance with him, and is confirmed by his death. Eventually, in the dialogue Theaetetus justifies his characterisation as the promising youth *par excellence*. The confutation of the propositions he formulates during the philosophical conversation is not to be equated with a failure.[39] The young mathematician is sincerely admired for his achievements in a discipline as important as mathematics, and he is now encouraged and supported to keep on searching for the definition of knowledge. The implicit climax of his complimentary treatment is to be found beyond this work, namely in the *Sophist*, the dialogue announced for the following day: Socrates introduces Theaetetus to the Eleatic Stranger as the most apt partner for a discussion on dialectic, and withdraws (as does Theodorus in the *Theaetetus*, after having introduced Theaetetus to Socrates as a brilliant young mathematician).

The sequence of Theaetetus' instructors corresponds to the sequence of teaching subjects in Plato's educational vision. The progression from mathematics to logic and dialectic largely corresponds to the model illustrated in the *Republic* (the *Sophist* probably dates to several years after *Theaetetus*, but, even in retrospect, it confirms this design).[40] It has been frequently observed

37 Socrates and Theaetetus are linked in various ways: external similarity leading to an inquiry about the possible similarity of their souls, unrestricted mutual admiration, praise, settings of the two frames before the death of each one, and devotion to their city. There is also a play with the contradiction between appearance (ugliness) and virtue; cf. Boeri (2016) 361–364.

38 On the contrary, Socrates' praise in the dialogue is mainly implicit. The philosopher needs no introduction to the reader, and every reference to his death evokes feelings of admiration and respect. These sentiments are reinforced, when, at the end of the dialogue, readers realise that the philosopher conducted this masterful discussion on an important philosophical topic, when he had already become aware of his impending fate. Cf. Fritz (2016) 148–149.

39 On an overall appraisal of Theaetetus' presentation and performance as an interlocutor, see McCoy (2008) 142–144.

40 The lack of an epilogue in combination with the announcement of a continuation serve as hints to the reader that the philosophical conversation about the topic discussed in the *Theaetetus* is neither completed nor dismissed: the dialogue is not self-sufficient, but is rather working material for further discussion, which requires a longer process of

- 978-90-04-44399-0

that Theaetetus has plenty of attributes that make him suitable as a guardian in Plato's ideal state.[41] In this respect, *Theaetetus* stages an educational programme. We witness in it a shift of emphasis from the person of the philosopher (Socrates as a shrewd interlocutor) and from the exposition of individual doctrines (as was the case in some of the dialogues of Plato's middle period) to the edification of a philosopher and to the demonstration of philosophical method. It is not a coincidence, that it is in this dialogue that Socrates exposes his technique of midwifery.

Socrates' respectful treatment of Theaetetus determines the way we read the dialogue.[42] We are prevented from siding with Socrates; instead, we support the common effort of all parties involved in the dialogue. We actively engage in thinking and reflecting on the topic under discussion; more than in any other dialogue, we try to answer the questions addressed to Theaetetus and evaluate his answers. The dialogue evolves in a way that elicits the desire to participate in it. The explicit expectation of Theaetetus' progress strengthens this inclination; at the same time, it alerts us to observe more closely the formative process he undergoes. The *Theaetetus* self-consciously draws the reader's attention to the formation of a philosopher as a gradual process. Socrates concludes that in the end the young mathematician is not the same as he was before, he is ready to demonstrate his progress in a future conversation (210b-d).

We have seen so far that the frames of the *Theatetetus* are all but decorative: they contain important hints that point to the character of the dialogue and attune the audience to it. But why did Plato let Euclides foreground the writing of the dialogue and not recount it, as did every other Platonic narrator? Answers that assume a physical handicap such as Euclides' old age or weak memory are entirely speculative,[43] since there is not the least hint supporting them in the text. Other factors seem to be more important.

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reflection and investigation. On the openness of the *Sophist*, see Sayre (2002) 232: '[…] Plato shaped the *Theaetetus* as an apparent failure, not because he lacked resources to end it otherwise, but because he conceived it as a dialectical exercise to prepare the reader for further reflection on the nature of knowledge. Thus the *Theaetetus* prepares us for the *sunousia* of the *Sophist*'; Cotton (2014) 252. For an effort to treat *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, and the missing *Philosopher* as a tetralogy, see Gill (2012).

41 See especially Dorter (1994) 69–70; Seeck (2010) 18; Blondell (2002) 257–260; Capuccino (2014) 156; cf. also Cotton (2014) 85–86.

42 Fritz (2016) 148–149.

43 E.g. Polansky 37 (1992); Tschemplik (2008) 18–19. For a more Platonic suggestion, see Giannopoulou (2014) 46: 'Having written down the conversation, Euclides has lost the ability to reproduce it from memory'.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Writing, in the *Theaetetus*, serves as a cure for a loss; it is a way to prolong the presence of a missing person.[44] Thus, there is a correspondence with the myth of Theuth (274c-275b) and the criticism of writing in the *Phaedrus* (275b-278b). Consequently, *Theaetetus* is to be interpreted against the backdrop of the *Phaedrus.* There, however, the autonomy of the written text and its emancipation from its author had been treateded as a deficiency. This is not the case here.

Moreover, the writing process culminates in a conscious decision which concerns the form of the dialogue and transmutes the role of the author. Euclides explains to Terpsion that after having accomplished the composition of the text, he gave a final touch to it by restoring the form of a real conversation, the form of dramatic dialogue. By doing so, he went, apparently, a step further than his source. He reproduced the form of the original dialogue, not Socrates' account of it. In other words, the text evokes the impression that it revives a past reality to the highest possible degree. This procedure touches upon the character of imitation, and, thus, evokes the discussion about the *lexis* of poetic *mimesis* in the *Republic* (392c-398b). But here, any distorting interference by a third party (the author) is radically refuted. Besides, the question of the different frame in which the discussion takes place emerges: in the *Republic* the discussion was about poetry and its educational effects, while here it related to a conscious desire for philosophical learning.

4 *Theaetetus*' Frames in (a Platonic) Context

As a matter of fact, the framing parts of the dialogue are rich in allusions to the conditions and methods of philosophical inquiry, whereas its main part provides stimulating material for further thought. As the proem suggests and the dialogue displays, practicing philosophy is first of all a collective effort. Coming together and discussing provides the model which even solitary thinking has to align itself with (thinking is defined as dialogue with the self).[45] The metaphor of midwifery, which concludes the inner frame, further illustrates the roles of the persons involved in a constructive philosophical dialogue. Three aspects seem to be particularly important in this context. First, the

44 Both the composition and the retrieval of Euclides' book are interrelated with a death – the death of Socrates and the death of Theaetetus respectively. The importance of mortality and death for the dialogue is slightly exaggerated by Stern (2008) 25.

45 *Tht.* 189e-190a, *Soph.* 263e-264b; cf. Scott (2000) 111–112. On philosophical *sunousia* cf. Sayre (1992) 231; Sayre (2002) 197–232.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

metaphor underscores the necessity of shared effort and discussion. As it has been observed, '[a]lthough Socrates claims in the *Theaetetus* that as a midwife he does not generate but only questions others, he also admits that he is in part the "cause" when those whom he questions "give birth to many beautiful things" (*Theaetetus* 150c-d)'.[46] Second, Socrates' method of midwifery implies that knowledge is not an object to be transferred, but a personal achievement, the end of a laborious way towards the acquisition of wisdom. Third, midwifery puts every idea under scrutiny.[47] Without testing, no philosophical theory is valid.

It is, however, quite surprising that *Theaetetus* also contains a model of scrutinising philosophical views in the absence of their proponent. In the course of the discussion, Theaetetus puts forward a thesis that is identified by Socrates as Protagorean (152a). Socrates could have discussed Protagoras' doctrine in his usual manner either with Theaetetus or with Theodorus, who is supposed to have been a friend of Protagoras and will be actively involved in the discussion in this part of the dialogue (161a-184b). Neither occurs, because Socrates prefers to take on Protagoras directly. Nevertheless, in contrast to the views of other philosophers, which are usually supposed to be commonly known, for Protagoras a book is taken as the basis for the discussion of his doctrine. Theaetetus concedes that he has read it several times (152a), an affirmation which suggests that he has reflected as much as he could upon its content (in a similar vein, Theodorus, as a friend of Protagoras is likely to have discussed directly with the sophist); yet, it is now Socrates who pretends to be encouraging a fair treatment of the author. Thus, he crafts a defense speech on behalf of the sophist (166a-168c), before refuting his points one by one. By so doing, Socrates demonstrates that a true philosopher is able to cope with the inherent weaknesses of written discourse. A point raised against writing in the *Phaedrus* was that an author is unable to answer questions or defend his views in an interpersonal communication, because the discussion of his work takes place in his absence; this deficiency is exactly what Socrates tries to eliminate here. Of course, a reader might suspect that Protagoras could have defended his theory in a different or even better way,[48] but this is also a challenge to the reader

46 Nichols (2009) 69–70 n. 68; cf. also 210b διά σέ.

47 Socrates' midwifery involves two stages: determining whether one is 'carrying', and testing of the new-born. What is unfolded in the dialogue is the second step; cf. Balansard (2015) 49. This is distinguished from the usual Socratic *elenchos*: while *elenchos* is concerned with persons who believe that they know something, midwifery is exercised on those who, like Theaetetus, are aware of their ignorance; Balansard (2015) 52.

48 See also Narcy (2013) 160–166 who conjectures that Socrates quotes from Protagoras. For critical remarks on Socrates' un-Protagorean arguments, see Giannopoulou (2014) 52–54.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

who may seek better arguments – and this is only one example of the ways the reader can get involved in the thinking process.

The emphasis on the written form of Protagoras' theory and the way Socrates responds to it indicate that the foregrounding of writing in the proem of *Theaetetus* is not an isolated motif devoid of further significance. On the contrary, it has to be interpreted in connection with both Socrates' defense of Protagoras and the criticism of writing in the *Phaedrus*.[49] While the *Phaedrus* maintains that writing neither guarantees nor favours constructive (philosophical) debate,[50] now Socrates demonstrates that this reservation cannot be an insuperable obstacle for the philosopher. A written text can serve as a starting point for a philosophical discussion, especially when it is impossible for the author of a text to appear in person – provided that the discussion observes the rules set by Socrates. Thus, writing can be useful, if its inherent shortcomings are avoided, that is if it is not supposed to substitute true knowledge (so as to make unwise people seem wise, 275a-b), nor does lead astray from the pursuit of truth.[51] This is exactly the case in the *Theaetetus* (as we are guided to realise), and in Plato's writings in general. Platonic dialogues are written in a way that rules out their reduction to binding verdicts easy to consume. It is in this sense that the author of the *Seventh Letter* maintains that Plato never wrote a treatise on the 'greatest' subjects (μέγιστα, 341b-c). The reason is that the ultimate targets of philosophical pursuit cannot be objectified and published in a form that is intelligible to all audiences. The letter is illuminating about Plato's views on writing, because it expands criticism to all verbal communication and transmission of knowledge in a radical way.[52] Language cannot grasp the ultimate truth; names, definitions, images and even knowledge of particular objects do not guarantee access to the higher form of beings. Grasping the truth (or the Forms) is a personal achievement based on a long, laborious, solitary process, and even speaking about it does not make sense, as the sight of the Forms cannot be communicated to those who lack this experience (342a-344d). Understanding presupposes the existence of knowledge and experience.[53]

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49 Cf. also the reference on those who are wholly dependent on books (κατὰ τὰ συγγράμματα φέρονται, 179e).

50 Moore (2012) 293–297. Socrates remarks in the *Phaedrus* that writing tells 'always the same' (275d-e).

51 Kahn (1996) 377-279; cf. Garcia Xavier (2011) 38, 274–278.

52 Sayre (1992); Kahn (1996) 388–390.

53 Cf. also *Resp.* 595b on poetry. In the *Phaedrus* writing provokes forgetfulness (275a), which 'would seem to mean not simply failure of access to memories or other vehicles

- 978-90-04-44399-0

If Euclides' text still is 'worth listening' to, this is not because it conveys sublime truths, but because it demonstrates the training of a philosophically disposed mind in the critical examination of every proposal, as a prerequisite for progress in philosophy; and it does not only illustrate Theaetetus' initiation into philosophical reasoning, but is also instructive for the reader, because it provides material suitable for the exercise of his/her mind. The extraordinary concern for the audience is indicated by the importance attributed to the form of the dialogue. Euclides declares (143c) that he removed (ἐξελών) the narrative parts between the talks (μεταξὺ τῶν λόγων διηγήσεις),[54] and justifies his decision with the statement ἵνα … ἐν τῇ γραφῇ μὴ παρέχοιεν πράγματα ('to avoid that their presence causes trouble in the text');[55] the vocabulary echoes expressions used in *Republic* 3 (τὰ μεταξὺ τῶν ῥήσεων ἐξαιρῶν, 394b; cf. also 393b), in the discussion about the different modes (λέξις: narrative, dramatic, mixed) of poetry (392c-394c). Although the key term *mimesis* is avoided, Euclides' diction invites readers to discuss his exposition against the background of the poetic theory of the *Republic*. Euclides' final deletions on his draft corresponds to a transformation of mode from mixed (characteristic of epic but also of Plato's narrated dialogues) to dramatic. In the simple narrative mode 'the poet speaks in his own voice and does not attempt to divert our attention to another direction, namely to thinking that somebody else is speaking and not himself' (393a), while the definition of imitation in direct discourse is that the poet 'assimilates his discourse as much as possible to the discourse of any speaker he has announced'; in this case the poet 'conceals' himself (393c). By adapting his text as closely as possible to the original event, Euclides replaced a narrative by Socrates (and a reproduction by him based on his own memory) with a discourse which not only assimilates to but is presented as identical

of content, but failure of access to the kinds of thought-processes constitutive of wisdom': Moore (2012) 294.

54 Even in narrated dialogues large sections have an uninterrupted dramatic form, while narrative interventions occur at transitions marking subdivisions of the text; cf. Andrieu (1951) 316–317, 323. The new practice seems to introduce a revision of Plato's standard practice in his middle period, e.g. in the *Parmenides*; cf. Brandwood (1990) 251 with a reference to *Prm*. 137c. Westermann's (2002) 27 interpretation of Euclides' statement as Plato's self-criticism does not hold.

55 The disturbance is caused by any information that increases the processing load in the reader's mind and diverts attention to objects other than the philosophical inquiry. Unnecessary contextual information might prompt awareness of the distance between reality and fiction; especially narratorial interventions force the assumption of an additional level of reality between the reader's reality and the fictional setting and imply an essential difference between the original object of knowledge and its representation(s). Plato's strategy in the *Theaetetus* is to undermine this distinction.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

to the one that once took place. As in the case of writing, readers are stimulated to understand the statements of the *Theaetetus* as challenges to revisit Plato's earlier positions (especially the condemnation of this type of speech in the *Republic*, 394b-395d), and explore their significance in context. Against the ban of poetry in *Republic* 3 (which cannot be discussed in more detail here), two provisos are suggested: first, while poetry invents its stories (they are called 'lies': 377a-378e)[56] and characters (with their discourse), the conversation between Socrates and Theaetetus eventually took place in exactly this form. It is real, and it is accurately reproduced. Therefore, this dialogue is not a re-telling (a reproduction or image of an original); it tends to coincide with the authentic dialogue, legitimised by Socrates' authorisation. Against the effort to reproduce the (hypothesised) discourse of fictive persons 'as much as possible' (ὅ τι μάλιστα), an absolute degree of fidelity is supposed to have been achieved by Euclides. This also answers the criticism of imitation in *Republic* 10 (597e) as a production of images (*eidola*) which are essentially different from the original and should neither be mistaken for it, nor guarantee its true knowledge.[57] What is reproduced is neither events (we are not eavesdropping on a discussion in a gymnasium at Athens in 399), nor characters (the servant who reads loudly cannot be mistaken for Socrates or Theaetetus), but only discourse. Provided that we don't credit it with more qualities than it really has, its effects on us can be the same as if we were present at the original event. Second, the characters whose words are reproduced in the *Theaetetus* are unreservedly commendable figures. Consequently, the harm of negative influence on the audience (an objection which is repeatedly raised in the *Republic*, 395e-397e) is averted. *Mimesis* has been condemned, among other reasons, because it encourages the imitator to consume himself in the imitation of different and dissimilar people, while the true philosopher has only one concern (ἕκαστος ἓν πράττει, 397e; cf. 394e) and deals only with noble things. Imitation of the one, appropriate object is not excluded (395b-d), although poetry is not welcome in the ideal state (with the exception of 'the more austere and less pleasing poet and story-teller for the sake of benefit', 398a-b). Theaetetus' characterisation is in alignment with this requirement. Apart from his similarity to Socrates and his intellectual power and good character, he is not interested in

56 The meaning most probably is fictionality; see Marušič (2011) 220.

57 What seems to be an illusion (listening to Socrates and Theaetetus) is more real than the discourse of a narrator who talks to us. Cornelli and Carvalho (2011) 104 remark that after the removal of details (which ultimately go back to Socrates) the dialogue becomes fictional, but paradoxically closer to the truth.

material goods (he does not care about the loss of his familial property, 144d), he has no familial bonds,[58] he eagerly engages in the philosophical debate and abandons the plan to train his body (144c). The young man is devoted to the pursuit of truth.

Plato's theory of imitation, however, is not the only intertext evoked by Euclides' statements on his writing method. The historical Euclides, if we give credence to a fragment transmitted by Stobaeus (II 31.52),[59] had argued for the interconnection between learning and imitation: οὗτοι γὰρ τῶν ἀνθρώπων κάλλιστα μανθάνουσιν, οἵτινες καὶ τὰ κάλλιστα μιμοῦνται (fr. 18 Giannantoni). According to this view, imitation is upgraded to a method of learning, and imitation of noble things leads to better learning (meaning both the learning of higher subjects and a more effective learning – the two can be regarded as supporting each other). Hence, in Euclides' opinion, imitation, under specific circumstances, is not only tolerable but also desirable, a view which is in agreement with our reading of *Theaetetus*' proem. *Theaetetus* is the example *par excellence* of a mimetic representation of κάλλιστα: it reproduces an instructive conversation with an exceptionally qualified young man, who is an expert in mathematics, a subject of paramount importance within Platonic education.[60] Euclides' fragment, his teaching and writing activity, together with his well-known activity as a schoolmaster and the author of Socratic dialogues provides an excellent explanation for his claim to have written the main part of *Theaetetus* and for his preference for the dramatic mode, which in Plato's theory is the most imitative of all literary modes. Besides, Megarians were famous for their dialectical exercises, and this may be a further justification for the choice of Euclides as the key figure of the proem.[61] He is not only the ideal person to transmit Socrates' words, but also the ideal discussant – if we suppose that the discussion between the two Megarians can continue – and a model for the reader.

58 Theaetetus' father was dead; on the literal and metaphorical use of the parent-child relation in the dialogue, see Dorter (1994) 76–77.

59 Döring (1972) 78 n. 1 ascribes this fragment to the homonymous mathematician (without arguments), but the philosophical implications of the fragment make the Megarian a better candidate than the mathematician. If Euclides understood dialogue as a form of *mimesis*, it is perhaps significant that he and his followers 'put their arguments into the form of question and answer' (πρὸς ἐρώτησιν καὶ ἀπόκρισιν τοὺς λόγους διατίθεσθαι, Diog. Laert. 2.106). For a similar suggestion cf. Seeck (2010) 12.

60 Plato claims in the *Republic* that the exercise of the philosopher's rational faculties is usually a task of mathematics (525d–526b).

61 See also Seeck (2010) 12.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

5 Conclusion

By using Euclides, an older Socratic writer and friend, as a 'ghost-writer' and by letting him expound his theoretical principles regarding the dialogue form, Plato revisits his earlier criticism of writing and mimetic literature and prompts his addressees to engage in a continuous dialectic pursuit of their meaning. Both these theories (developed in the *Phaedrus* and in the *Republic* respectively) contradicted the philosopher's own practice of writing dialogues. Thus, any reference to them maximised the audiences' critical awareness and activated their contextual knowledge that Platonic dialogues were available to them in written form. While the reservations expressed previously against writing and poetry remain valid, the *Theaetetus* suggests that the key which resolves the seeming paradoxes and contradictions is philosophy itself, because it restrains the side-effects of both writing and imitation and maximises their benefits.

Theaetetus self-consciously proclaims the power of philosophy and the philosopher. A philosopher is not misled by writing, further on he uses imitation in a beneficial manner, especially in the context of education. The dialogue is less concerned with philosophical content (a fact that may account for the absence of any allusions to the Theory of Forms, despite the dialogue's topic; nonetheless it is not incompatible with the theory). *Theaetetus* focuses primarily on the method of philosophical inquiry from the initiate's perspective.

The dialogue not only demonstrates the educational process but also encourages the audience's involvement in it. In the *Theaetetus*, the cast, the setting, the plot and the discourse of the participants create an environment which suggests and supports the reader's active and constructive response to the text: numerous artful subtleties encourage the immersion of the reader into the fiction. The familiarity with the persons who appear, their positive evaluation, the prevailing tone of warm praise and sincere admiration, but also the vocabulary of the proem seem to be designed to stimulate the audience's interest and emotional involvement. In addition, despite the temporal and spatial remoteness of the setting and the supposition that the dialogue is fictitious, every element in it could be historically true, as there are no impossible or clearly invented details. Moreover, the final part of the proem raises explicit claims about the accuracy of the main dialogue.

The text constructs an ideal reader and an ideal setting for its intended (original) reception. This reader is supposed to be familiar with Plato's life, work and thought, aware of the requirements of the study of philosophy, and willing to follow this path. Readers are invited to realise the shifts of context in which some memorable Platonic ideas re-appear, and they must be prepared to cope with some crucial ambivalences of these theories. The ideal setting

for the study of the dialogue is an environment which maximises the benefits stemming from it. The *Theaetetus* enhances critical thinking and sharpens philosophical reasoning, preparing its audience for the study of dialectic.

Cumulative indications also suggest a coherent explanation for some of the outstanding features of the outer and inner frames of the dialogue. A number of details concerning the persons, places, and temporal setting, but also implicit intertextual hints call to the readers' mind the idea of Plato's absence from Athens. Since the date of the dialogue in the early 360's is generally accepted, it is tempting to associate the emphasis on writing in the proem of the *Theaetetus* with a practical necessity, namely with the requirements of communication after Plato's departure for Sicily in 367. Even if it was not Plato's absence that gave the impulse for the rehabilitation of writing, it is at least Plato's absence that enabled the revisiting of this motif (reminding that the author cannot be interrogated would be less noteworthy if the author of *Theaetetus* could be reached in Athens, etc.). *Theaetetus* may have been the first dialogue to be written and sent to Plato's followers during his second visit to Sicily. If so, *Theaetetus* is the first œuvre to self-consciously claim the status of a textbook for advanced students, a response to the needs of a type of instruction which is emancipated from the physical presence of an authoritative figure, but still controlled by him. The re-introduction of the dramatic form which will be used in Plato's subsequent dialogues (*Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Philebus* but also in *Timaeus* whose chronology is not easy to decide) is initiated here. *Theaetetus* opens a series of dialogues dedicated to the training of insiders and of philosophically disposed youths, who are expected to actively engage in philosophical debates.

CHAPTER 12

Chance Encounters and Abrupt Endings

On the Preludes and Closures of Plato's Third Thrasyllan Tetralogy

Spyridon Rangos

ὥστε εἰ μὴ καὶ ταῦθ᾽ οὕτως σύγκειται πρὸς αὐτοῦ τοῦ Πλάτωνος, ἀλλ᾽ ἡμῖν γε τὸ πρᾶγμα λυσιτελές

Procl. *In Prm.* 675.28-29

1 The Question*

The first Thrasyllan tetralogy has an obvious dramatic unity. In the *Euthyphro* Socrates is on his way to receive the official charge made against him by Meletus. In the *Apology* he is already in front of the jury, and defends his overall mission in life. In the *Crito* he finds himself in prison waiting for his execution. In the *Phaedo* he enjoys his last philosophical conversation with some intimate friends, calmly drinks the hemlock, and serenely passes away.

The unity of the first tetralogy is not only dramatic. Had Thrasyllus been eager to arrange dialogues according to their dramatic dates, the sequence should have been *Theaetetus*, *Euthyphro*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo.* But in that case the tightly knit pair of *Sophist-Statesman* would have interrupted a series of dialogues in which Socrates is the protagonist. Thrasyllus apparently wanted the Platonic corpus to begin with an introduction to the philosophic life as manifested in the exemplary case of Socrates.[1]

* I am grateful to the learned audience of the Cyprus Conference 'Framing the Dialogues: How to Read Openings and Closures in Plato', University of Cyprus, Nicosia, 10–12 December 2015 and to my colleague Nikos Charalabopoulos for precious remarks. I would also like to express my warm thanks to the editors of the volume. In dealing with the tetralogical arrangement of Plato's dialogues I am greatly indebted to Tarrant (1993).

1 Cf. Diog. Laert. 3.57: πρώτην μὲν οὖν τετραλογίαν τίθησι τὴν κοινὴν ὑπόθεσιν ἔχουσαν· παραδεῖξαι γὰρ βούλεται ὁποῖος ἂν εἴη ὁ τοῦ φιλοσόφου βίος.

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- 978-90-04-44399-0

The subject-matter of the aporetic *Euthyphro*, 'what is piety?', prefaces a trilogy of dialogues crucially centred upon this virtue as a determining factor for the proper understanding of man's relation to the political and the divine orders, the present and the hereafter, life and death.

The rationale behind the arrangement of dialogues in other Thrasyllan tetralogies is, at least in part, equally evident. In the second tetralogy the undisputed dramatic sequence of *Theaetetus-Sophist-Statesman* is not too oddly prefaced by the *Cratylus*. In the fourth tetralogy the thematic unity of two dialogues named after Alcibiades and of one called *Lovers* (*Ἐρασταί*), in all three of which love and philosophy provide a theme for many variations, is partly disrupted by a dialogue whose primary title *Hipparchus*, in striking contrast to its theme, the profit-making man (φιλοκερδής) featuring in an alternative title, is reminiscent of a famous erotic crime[2] mentioned also in the dialogue itself (*Hipparch*. 229b-d).[3] In the sixth tetralogy the thematic unity of *Euthydemus*, *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*, where Socrates is variously shown trying to unmask the sophists' deceptive craft, is concluded by the *Meno* where some positive doctrine on sound teaching is underway. In the eighth tetralogy the undisputed and lengthy dramatic sequence of *Republic* – *Timaeus* – *Critias* is not inadequately prefaced by the extremely short *Clitophon* in which the subject of justice is briefly discussed and the main character's disappointment with Socrates in favour of Thrasymachus paves the way to the first book of the *Republic*.

By contrast, the unity of the third Thrasyllan tetralogy is not obvious at all. Neither thematically nor dramatically are the four dialogues contained therein continuous or homogeneous. To be sure, the *Symposium* is thematically related to the *Phaedrus*, since they both deal with erotic love – even if this is the sole subject of the former, and only one among the several topics discussed in the latter. But how these two dialogues are connected with the preceding *Parmenides* and *Philebus* is far from clear.

In what follows I will address the question of the assumed unity of the third Thrasyllan tetralogy by paying due attention to some dramatic details, especially (but not exclusively) those present in the opening and closing scenes of the dialogues. I will try to highlight the hermeneutical relevance of these

2 The motivation behind Hipparchus' assassination by Harmodius and Aristogeiton was erotic jealousy, not a deep-seated desire to overturn tyranny, according to Thucydides (6.54–59; cf. 1.20).

3 The problem of the authenticity, dubiousness or spuriousness of these dialogues does not concern me here since it is clear that Thrasyllus considered them all authentic. The dialogues deemed spurious by him are appended, together with the pseudo-Platonic *Definitions*, after the ninth tetralogy in a non-tetralogical order.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

dramatic details to the philosophical views and arguments contained in the main parts. In particular, I will attempt to indicate the image of the philosopher that emerges in the person of Socrates, and his assumed progress along the route of philosophical inquiry, if we read the dialogues in the sequence indicated by Thrasyllus' arrangement. In choosing this method I follow a recent suggestion which says that 'the full exploitation of the interpretative potential of acknowledged Platonic trilogies or tetralogies may prove […] rewarding'.[4]

Before we proceed a caveat is in order: no prelude or closure of a Platonic dialogue would be significant without the philosophical discussion that follows or precedes it. More generally, the two components of a Platonic dialogue, the literary and the argumentative, should mutually illuminate one another. Who says what to whom, on what occasion, in what manner, and to what end seem to be as significant markers for the interpretation of a Platonic dialogue as what is actually said. If Plato is indeed the writer of philosophical dialogues *par excellence*, in the sense that of all philosophers who have composed dialogues he is the only one whose own views are not transparently represented by anyone of his fictitious characters, and that as a result in his case, and in his case alone, no *dramatis persona* (with the possible exception of the Athenian Stranger)[5] is the author's mouthpiece,[6] then the choices of dramatic setting, date, interlocutors and mode of presentation are crucial signs for an estimation of the author's overall intentions, whether planned or largely unconscious. Literary analysis and argumentative examination are indispensable parts for a proper philosophical interpretation of the thought of such a complex writer as Plato. Whether historical or fabricated by later admirers, the story that upon Plato's death a writing-tablet was found in which alternative versions for the beginning of the *Republic* had been inscribed, and the related report (or inference) that Plato kept 'combing, curling and in all manners re-braiding his dialogues' until he reached old age[7] show that a preoccupation with literary form has been, from antiquity onwards, deemed central to Plato's concerns. Alternative beginnings of the *Theaetetus* have also been attested.[8] This is not to overrate the literary aspect at the expense of the argumentative, however. The

4 Charalabopoulos (2012) 12.

5 Cicero (*Leg.* 1.4.15) is the first known author to explicitly identify the Athenian Stranger with Plato. Many modern scholars have followed his lead.

6 Cf. Scolnicov (2016) 5: 'But their [i.e. Cicero's, Galileo's and Berkeley's] dialogues are little more than confrontations of ideas thinly veiled behind names of speakers that are mere personifications of philosophical positions'.

7 D.H. *Comp.* 25.209–218.

8 Anon. *In Tht.* 3.28–37 Diels-Schubart.

arguments are not 'subordinate to the drama', as an extreme view has it.[9] Since 'as a rule it is an argument which forms the backbone of a dialogue and gives it its structure',[10] the dramatic details of a dialogue, and in particular those found in its proem and closure, should be approached with an eye firmly directed to the views, arguments and counter-arguments of the main part. This method of approaching Plato, recently revived in the relevant literature and pushed to an ingeniously seminal extreme by Myles Burnyeat who has seen anticipations of substantial philosophical themes in the very first words of a dialogue,[11] goes back to antiquity. Proclus, for instance, claims that the proper approach to a Platonic proem is to see the philosophical content of the main part (τὰ πράγματα τὰ ὑποκείμενα τῷ διαλόγῳ) reflected in the opening scene of the dialogue (σκοπεῖν ὅπως καὶ τὰ προοίμια ταῦτα ἐνεικονίζεται).[12] With appropriate qualifications the same could be true of the closing scenes. Though in the majority of the Platonic dialogues the closures are significantly less elaborate than the proems they are dramatically suggestive all the same. On the whole, it is the philosophical content of a dialogue that gives meaning and purpose to beginning and end. Without it a prelude-cum-closure frame would be like an empty mount that might indeed receive a great variety of pictures or paintings but is actually connected to none in particular. We cannot pass a judgement on the merit (or otherwise) of the opening and closing scenes of a Platonic dialogue unless we grasp relatively well what goes on in the main, argumentative, part, even if it is true to say that 'there are times [...] when Plato's vision outruns the resources of his argument and when, consequently, we shall not understand him if we limit our attention to the arguments and what they could reasonably be thought to establish'.[13]

An application of this method to an extent that does full justice to the philosophical themes and arguments of the dialogues contained in the third Thrasyllan tetralogy cannot be undertaken here. But if readers find in the following

9 Arieti (1991) 11.

10 Frede (1992) 202; cf. Gadamer (2000) 254: 'Plato portrays only because he argues. He does not portray solely in order to achieve a poetic effect, but rather to say something – as a thinker – through poetic representation'; Puchner (2010) 25: 'Plato's dialogues are likewise [sc. like tragic dramas] centered in a single unifying principle; however this principle is not action but argument'.

11 Burnyeat (1997) = (2012a) 305-325 following the lead of Clay (1992). The claim is generalised by McCabe (2015) 7: 'If the dialogues of Plato are heirs to the verbal tradition of Heraclitus, it is a good interpretative method that Plato writes no word in vain'. For the philosophical significance of preludes in Plato see Capuccino (2014).

12 Procl. *In Prm.* 659.12-23; cf. 630.28–36, 645.9-11.

13 Burnyeat (2012b) 238.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

thoughts any insights into, or clues for an interpretation of the tetralogy as a whole, and if, moreover, they get a glimpse of the image of the philosopher, and his basic concerns, that progressively emerges when the four works are read as a well-ordered sequence, this will be sufficient for our purposes.

2 Preludes and Closures as Literary Techniques

The *Parmenides* is a narrated dialogue, the *Philebus* and the *Phaedrus* straightforwardly dramatic, and the *Symposium*, the most sophisticated of all four from a literary point of view, is a mixed kind of dialogue with a framed dramatic conversation and a subsequent flashback narration.[14] Their closures also differ substantially. The two erotic dialogues are rounded off, in the sense that their endings indicate the completion of the event which triggered the previous discussion, and of the discussion itself as a result. But the *Philebus* is intentionally open-ended; and the *Parmenides* leaves the reader with a profound sense of puzzlement since the recapitulation of the entire dialectical exercise of the second part of the dialogue (*Prm.* 166c) is replete with glaring contradictions but crowned with an emphatic 'very true' (ἀληθέστατα) on the part of young Aristotle, Parmenides' interlocutor.

The *Parmenides* is a notoriously difficult dialogue. After the elaborate introduction which we will presently examine, the first main part of the dialogue where Socrates expounds his theory of Forms and venerable Parmenides subjects it to serious criticism, though very demanding, is not extremely hard to follow. But the second, dialectical, part, where Parmenides presents five[15] deductions from the positive hypothesis 'if the One is' and four more from its negation, is almost impossible to make clear sense of. The dialectical part is not a joke, however. There is not the least indication in the dialogue that either Parmenides or Socrates, or young Aristotle for that matter, regard it as a playful extravaganza. They all seem to be extremely serious about it, and Plato keeps silent about the reactions of those present in the discussion, presumably because he wants to indicate that they are all profoundly struck by the deductions and the contradictory results reached by each and all. Moreover, the dialogue begins with a very elaborate prologue. There would be absolutely no

14 For aspects of the modern exploration of the ancient distinction (Diog. Laert. 3.50) between dramatic (or direct or scripted), narrated and mixed dialogues see Capra (2003); Schofield (2013).

15 Against the orthodox view which takes the third deduction of the *Parmenides* to be an appendix or coda to the second one I have argued extensively in Rangos (2014) 557–568.

point for Plato to make the dialogue start in such a sophisticated way if he did not want to give the aura of a time-honoured and unforgettable conversation which obviously includes the second, dialectical, part. A long, convoluted and highly abstract argumentation such as the second part consists of is unforgettable only if it contains or indicates some serious content or method. Even if the dialectical part were meant to be a joke it would have to be regarded as one with extremely important philosophical consequences.

Let us see, then, the beginning. A certain Cephalus from Clazomenae, not to be confused with the Cephalus of *Republic* 1, relates the conversation to an unspecified friend or group of friends in an unspecified setting. Is it in Athens? Is it in Clazomenae? Is it somewhere else? We are not told. But we are told that a considerable span of time elapsed between the original conversation in the house of Pythodorus outside the city walls and the present narration (126b-127d). Interpreters generally claim that Cephalus' direct narration is not removed in terms of time from his second visit to Athens and that the two events should be placed in the 380's.[16] They think that had Socrates been alive Cephalus would go to him, rather than to Antiphon, to learn about that important meeting of his with old Parmenides. Proclus (*In Prm.* 669.6-8) already had maintained that the conversation between Cephalus and Antiphon happened after Socrates' death.[17] But there is not the slightest hint in the dialogue that Socrates is indeed dead. On the contrary, the emphatic reference to him being young at the time of the meeting would make one think that he is still alive.[18] The frame dialogues of the *Phaedo* and the *Theaetetus* make it clear from the

16 E.g. Gill (1996) 4; Allen (1997) 70; Nails (2002) 309.

17 Proclus' reasoning for placing the frame conversation after Socrates' death is different from the reasons standardly adduced by modern interpreters. Proclus (*In Prm.* 668.25–669.12) does not say, or even imply, that if Socrates were alive Cephalus would go directly to him instead of seeking Antiphon. He speaks, rather, about Perictione's marriage to Ariston, in which Plato, Adeimantus and Glaucon (in such an order) were born, and then about her second marriage to Pyrilampes, which issued to Antiphon's birth, in order to conclude (addressing the reader): 'you see, then, from these things being so reported that Cephalus' meeting with Antiphon happened, as it seems (ὡς εἰκός), after Socrates' death'. The γάρ clause which follows specifies that Plato had twenty-four years of age upon Socrates' death and that Perictione, having already three sons, married again and gave birth to Antiphon who now (νῦν = at the time of Cephalus' encounter with him) is an adult (ἐν ἡλικίᾳ) and busies himself with horses. Since Proclus cannot mean that Perictione's second marriage postdated Socrates' death, the implication clearly is that Plato's half-brother could not have been an adult before Socrates' execution. But this need not be so if we place Antiphon's birth in mid- to late-420s (see below).

18 Schofield (2013) 93 correctly notes: 'we must imagine the retelling happening towards the end of the 5th century'.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

very beginning that the discussion we are going to hear postdates Socrates' execution. It is not insignificant, moreover, that both of these frame dialogues are set outside Athens: in Phlius and Megara, respectively. It seems, then, clear that when Plato wanted to place the narrator of a legendary discussion at a time posterior to Socrates' death he did so unambiguously. To come back to the *Parmenides*, we may ask: if Socrates was still alive at the time Cephalus visited Athens for the second time why did not Cephalus seek *him*? Why, that is, did not Plato make Cephalus have a direct report of the conversation from Socrates himself or at least check the report given by somebody else against Socrates' own memories? In the similar case of the *Symposium* (173b) Apollodorus gives his friends the report of Aristodemus, not of Socrates himself, about what happened in the house of Agathon, though he says that he has checked the accuracy of some points (ἔνια) with Socrates. We may think of several answers to this question. We may assume, for instance, that had he gone to Socrates Cephalus would have a first-hand report by an eye-witness of the event, and the aura of legend would be seriously diminished. We may also suppose that Socrates would be reluctant to narrate a conversation in which, contrary to the fame of the argument-winner *par excellence* he has in the meantime attained, he had been forced to an impasse. We may also think – and this is the important matter – that since Socrates, as Plato portrays him in his middle-period dialogues, still believes in Forms in his mature years, he has managed in the meantime to resolve the important issues raised by Parmenides against his rather crude theory of early youth: such a Socrates would not be an objective and impartial reporter of the *aporias* which he succumbed to when young. His report might have been contaminated by arguments devised later against Parmenides' objections (and as a result of them), and the state of genuine perplexity, so necessary for a proper philosophical career to get started and going (cf. Pl. *Tht*. 155c-d), would have been long surpassed. As things stand, we do not learn, within the context of the dialogue as a whole, whether or not Socrates has managed to overcome Parmenides' perspicuous objections and save the theory of Forms. We, the readers, are thus implicitly invited to make the attempt.

To place Cephalus' narration around the end of the fifth century would not conflict, as most interpreters think it does, with the data provided in the dialogue. Antiphon, Plato's younger half-brother, must have been born in mid- to late-420's. During the first visit of Cephalus to Athens he was a small child. A date around or shortly after 420 for that trip would be appropriate. Ten or so years later, when he was a teenager (μειράκιον), he asked, on several occasions, Pythodorus to let him know the reputable conversation so that he finally learnt it by heart (*Prm*. 126b-c). At the time of Cephalus' second visit to Athens he was no longer an ardent admirer of philosophy as he had been in his teenage

- 978-90-04-44399-0

years. He had turned to horse-riding instead, a very respectable occupation for an aristocrat like him. He need not have been more than twenty-something years of age to have realised who he is and what he likes, and to follow, as a result, the family way of his homonymous grandfather in dealing with horses rather than arguments. Antiphon's capacity to memorise and narrate by heart a very complex philosophical discussion in its entirety does not turn him into a philosopher. Good memory may be a necessary prerequisite for a proper philosophical occupation (cf. *Resp*. 486c-d) but it is not a sufficient condition for it.

In any case, since the original conversation between Socrates and Parmenides must have taken place in the Great Panathenaic festival of 450 B.C. to be at all credible,[19] the time lapse between it and Cephalus' narration amounts to almost half a century. If we think of Cephalus' second visit to Athens to have happened in the same year in which his direct narration to an unspecified audience takes place, it follows that almost fifty years after the original meeting of Socrates with Parmenides and Zeno in the house of Pythodorus the fame of it was still so fervently alive as to make some philosophers from Clazomenae to take up a long trip to Athens in order to find out what exactly was actually said fifty full years earlier. This is clearly a literary indication of how philosophically important that legendary conversation was actually supposed to be.

We, the audience, learn from Cephalus of Clazomenae what he has learnt from Antiphon who told him what he had learnt from Pythodorus, the host of the philosophers from Elea, about what Zeno, Socrates and Parmenides said in the memorable event of 450 B.C. No other Platonic dialogue has so many layers of transmission. In the comparable case of the *Symposium*, it is only in the case of Diotima's speech that the same number of layers occurs between the original conversation and its transmission to us.[20] In all other speeches Apollodorus tells his friends (and us) what he has learnt from Aristodemus about what Aristophanes, Socrates, Alcibiades and the rest of the company had said in the memorable dinner-party of 416 B.C. The report as it reaches us is there

19 Mansfeld (1986) 43–44 has claimed, against the mainstream view, that Plato intended the story not to be credible at all since the event of Zeno's visit to Athens at the age of forty should be placed, according to the testimony of Diogenes Laertius (9.29), in 462 B.C. when Socrates was only seven years old. If that were the case, we would have a deliberate anachronism on Plato's part comparable only to Socrates' knowledge, in the *Menexenus*, of an event (the King's Peace, 387 B.C.) that happened no less than twelve years after his death. But perhaps this blatant anachronism should not be attributed to Plato at all: Nails (2002) 319 thinks that the dramatic date of the *Menexenus* is 401/0 B.C. assuming that 244b-246a is a later interpolation. If she is right, we do not have any comparable case of *deliberate* anachronism in Plato's genuine works.

20 Cf. the schema of transmission in Halperin (1992) 98.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

second-hand. Here, in the *Parmenides*, as also in the single case of Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*, it is third-hand. By way of contrast, we may compare the beginning of the *Phaedo*, a dialogue not contained in the tetralogy we are examining. Echecrates asks Phaedo whether he was personally present in the prison where Socrates took the hemlock, and Phaedo emphatically replies that he was (57a). The report of Socrates' last conversation with his intimate friends that we, no less than Echecrates, are going to learn from Phaedo's lips is the report of an actual eye-witness of the event. Between the reader or listener of this dialogue and the ideas expressed by Socrates et co. there is only one intermediary. In the *Parmenides*, by contrast, there are several. The discrepancy between a first and a third-hand report should be significant. Through this literary device Plato achieves historical verisimilitude and highlights the philosophical importance of a conversation that is, no doubt, fabricated by him. But he also distances himself from it. By placing the discussion almost a quarter of a century before his own birth, when Socrates was still young, Plato implies that a thoughtful exploration of, and concern for, Forms and dialectic is a prerequisite step for introduction to philosophy proper. No person who does not go through all the mental turmoil indicated in the first and, more importantly, the second part of the dialogue can be reborn as a philosopher. Socrates did so when he was young. When we meet him firmly espousing Forms in his mature years we are meant to infer that he has managed to adequately reply in the meantime to Parmenides' serious challenge which had reduced him to speechlessness when young. In this sense the *Parmenides*, though hopelessly difficult, may still be seen as an *introductory* dialogue. In it we become accustomed with the kind of inquiry that we should be prepared to follow, time and again, once we have decided to become philosophers. Cephalus and his philosophically minded friends travelled all the way from Clazomenae to Athens to get this knowledge. Those who think of 'Chinese whispers'[21] have a point if they mean the layers of mediate transmission to have purified Cephalus' report of insignificant details and to have put the philosophical substance of the arguments into a crystal-clear form. If they mean 'Chinese whispers' to have altered the substance of the philosophy contained in the dialogue, as it actually happens in the said funny game of children, they miss, I think, the whole point of mediated transmission. The literary device of multiple narrators is both a sign that the reported discussion has become legendary over time and an index to its fictive character.[22]

21 McCabe (2015) 139–140; cf. Scolnicov (2003) 44 speaking of a 'Chinese-box arrangement'.
22 Cf. Schofield (2013) 93–94.

In the *Symposium* the situation is very similar. Apollodorus narrates to his unnamed friends, who are very eager to learn, the conversation that some aristocrats, including Aristophanes, Socrates and Alcibiades, had on the nature of erotic love in the house of Agathon, some fifteen or so years before. Though only one of them directly addresses Apollodorus in the first two Stephanus pages of the dialogue it is clear that several more are present.[23] Those unnamed friends are not philosophers, however; nor do they come from a city in Asia Minor. They are Athenian businessmen.[24] As in the *Parmenides* no specific place and date is given to the framing dialogue – though here, as opposed to the *Parmenides*, Socrates is explicitly said to be alive (*Symp.* 172e). The occasion for Apollodorus' narration is not mentioned: it may have been another drinking-party like that of Agathon's since Apollodorus addresses not one but a number of people. In any case, the original conversation, which is firmly placed the day after the public celebration of Agathon's first victory in a dramatic competition, on the eve of the Sicilian expedition, that is in 416, is shown to have become legendary by the end of the century since Apollodorus' unnamed friends and also Glaucon wanted to learn about it many years after it happened. Apollodorus, who was a child at the time, memorised the conversation from the report of Aristodemus, a follower of Socrates, who was then present. The frame dialogue between Apollodorus and his friends is not resumed at the end of the work. After a couple of remarks by an anonymous friend at the first pages of the dialogue, Apollodorus begins a long monologue which follows Socrates till he reaches home the night after the important event in the house of Agathon.

Though similar in many respects, the *Parmenides* and the *Symposium* also display significant differences. They both narrate a philosophically important discussion of the past which has become legendary in the meantime. They both situate that discussion in a fixed date and place (Pythodorus' house in 450 B.C., Agathon's house in 416 B.C.). They both mention Platonic Forms. They both involve Socrates in the position of a disciple – of Parmenides in the eponymous dialogue, of Diotima in the *Symposium*. But the Socrates they involve is in other respects very different. In the *Parmenides* he is young and inexperienced in what we may call dialectical metaphysics; hence, he is unable to adequately defend the theory of Forms which he endorses. In the *Symposium* he is mature and well-versed: he readily admits to know erotic things (τὰ ἐρωτικά) very well (177d, cf. 199b, 201d, 212b), which as the dialogue unfolds we understand to be the things pertaining to philosophy as love of, and

23 The second person plural (πυνθάνεσθε) occurs in the very first sentence (172a) of the dialogue and recurs several times later (173c-e).

24 *Symp.* 173c: τοὺς ὑμετέρους [sc. λόγους] τοὺς τῶν πλουσίων καὶ χρηματιστικῶν.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

search for, wisdom (204b). The erotic things that Socrates knows crucially involve the dialectical pair of Lack and Resourcefulness since mythical Eros is said by Diotima to have Penia and Poros as parents, i.e. to be born and nourished thereby (203b-204b). The erotic quest for wisdom which Socrates now possesses involves the courage, and also the art, of admitting ignorance, deficiency and want, an art that Socrates was not explicitly shown to possess in the *Parmenides*. In the *Symposium*, by contrast, Socrates possesses the art of raising pertinent questions about the topic at hand, and of handling them in appropriate and intellectually satisfactory ways (especially in his elenchus of Agathon, 199c-201c); though still ignorant in most subjects he is well-versed in things erotic, i.e. in situations of desire where the object of love is ardently pursued in ways that always undermine the self-sufficiency of the seeker. In the thirty-four years that have elapsed since the visit of the Eleatic philosophers to Athens Socrates has significantly evolved as a metaphysical dialectician. The theory of Forms that he now espouses is no longer prey to Parmenides' seemingly fatal earlier objections. He has managed to properly defend his theory because in the meantime he has learned, we may suppose, two things. He has learned, first, not to despise nor exclude anything from the domain of Forms as he previously did when he (i) hesitated about whether or not there are Forms of natural kinds, and (ii) firmly denied that there are Forms of ignoble things like hair, mud and dirt (*Prm*. 130c-e). Second, he has learnt the close interconnection or mutual dependence of opposites, such as the one and the many, which he clearly tended to treat as essentially separate from each other earlier in his life (cf. *Prm*. 129a-130a, *Phlb*. 14c-15c). At the end of the *Symposium* Socrates, still sober and fully awake, is reported to discuss with Aristophanes and Agathon the nature of poetry, and to compel them to admit, contrary to what happens in contemporary Athens, that tragic poets should be able to compose comedies as well as tragedies and comic poets tragedies as well as comedies. Socrates' point presumably is that since all expert knowledge deals with opposites, i.e. that it belongs to the same science to know, say, health and disease (in the case of medicine), proper and improper times for ploughing and sowing (in the case of agriculture), good and bad weather for sailing (in the case of the helmsman's art), if poetry is to count as expert knowledge at all, the poet should be able to deal with the relevant pairs of opposites: the painful and the pleasant, the serious and the funny, the tragic and the comic. The end of the *Symposium* is a clear indication of Socrates' improvement over his earlier inexperienced self. The dialectics of erotic love as a dynamic desire stemming from the opposite states of lack and fullness, deficiency and completeness, poverty and resourcefulness, has shown him that absence of the good and the beautiful is no less important for understanding the human condition than are the

- 978-90-04-44399-0

good and the beautiful themselves. The philosophical lover is not the owner of, but a seeker after, the good and the beautiful, a fact which implies that he is deeply aware of their (practical) absence as well as (mental) presence in his life. The Socrates of the *Symposium* has moved beyond the optimistic and self-indulgent limitations of his adolescent years.

The *Symposium* is replete with positive doctrine about love and beauty, and it is dramatically rounded off. We are provided both with a theoretical description of love (in Diotima's speech), its ultimate object included (the Form of Beauty), and with a paradigmatic instance of bittersweet love (in Alcibiades' praise of Socrates). We are told not only the completion of the event in Agathon's house but also what Socrates did the day after until he went back home the following evening (223d). The *Parmenides*, by contrast, is practically aporetic in substance. Aristotle eagerly confirms the conclusion of the whole dialectical exercise offered by Parmenides at the end of the dialogue but this conclusion is the *beginning* rather than the end of the relevant investigation since it is replete with glaring contradictions. Though the dialectical exercise has been completed to Parmenides' apparent satisfaction, the audiences – the people in Pythodorus' house, Socrates included, Antiphon, the philosophers from Clazomenae, including Cephalus himself, the addressee(s) of Cephalus' narration no less than the (ancient and modern) readers – are all left profoundly puzzled. The fact that Cephalus does not intervene as a narrator to ease out that puzzlement contributes to the strange and unfamiliar feeling we are left with at the end of the dialogue. In this sense the *Parmenides* is intentionally open-ended.

The *Philebus*, too, is open-ended. But the open-ended-ness of the *Philebus* is different from that of the *Parmenides*. The *Philebus* is explicitly open-ended whereas the Parmenides is only implicitly so. To Socrates' conclusion (67b) Protarchus answers with the very same word that concluded the *Parmenides*: ἀληθέστατα, 'very true'. But instead of this being the very last word of the dialogue Protarchus then says to Socrates that 'there is still a little (σμικρόν) missing'. From other Platonic dialogues, including the *Symposium*,[25] we know that when Socrates seeks to raise a small point (σμικρόν), the thesis of his interlocutor begins to tremble and finally collapses. What are we then to make of this end of the *Philebus* which is not an end?

First, we are reminded of the beginning which was not a beginning. The dialogue named after Philebus, 'lover-of-youth', begins abruptly when Philebus is already tired with Socrates' interrogation and Protarchus takes over to defend

25 *Chrm.* 193d, *Prt.* 328e, 329b, *Grg.* 462d, *Symp.* 199b, 201c.

the hedonistic thesis in his stead. The non-ended ending turns back to, and invokes, the non-begun beginning.[26] Damascius, noticing this literary feature, provides two solutions of which the second is, to his mind, definitely preferable.[27] We may either think, he claims, that the dialogue begins later than the beginning of the conversation and ends earlier than its end because the Good itself is beginning-less and endless; or, a much better answer, we may follow Isidorus, Damascius' own master, in thinking that a discussion culminating to the determination of the mixed kind of life should indicate that there is a further good than the good of the mixed life, and this it can do by being itself a mixed kind of discussion with a beginning which is not primary and an end which is not ultimate.

Second, since Protarchus has been convinced in the meantime of the relative superiority of the philosophic to the hedonistic kind of life, he is now willing to pursue philosophical questions with more eagerness than before, and does not let Socrates go until he has understood every implication of the view agreed upon to his satisfaction.

Third, we are given an insinuation (in partial agreement with Damascius' preferred solution) that the topic of the best human life, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, may not have been treated adequately, after all, or that it has not been treated *conclusively*. This insinuation tallies well with the epistemological and metaphysical digression of the dialogue (*Phlb.* 16c-27c) where it was said that unless one knows the exact number of the elements involved in any particular domain of being one does not adequately know the domain in question (16d). As Socrates later explains (25b-27c), the mixture of indeterminacy (ἄπειρον) with limit (πέρας) brings about the so-called 'mixed and generated being' (μεικτὴν καὶ γεγενημένην οὐσίαν, 27b) which in all domains normatively determines 'what is moderate' (τὸ μέτριον, 24c), e.g. health, musical harmony, temperate seasons, etc. (25e-26b). If relevant questions about the best human life remain unanswered, we are bound to fall back to the shaky ground of indeterminateness (ἄπειρον) which is also the shaky ground of inexperience (ἀπειρία). Despite Socrates' attempt to evaluate and rate the

26 Already noticed by Burnyeat (1997) 18–19 = (2012a) 324–325.

27 Dam. *In Phlb.* 11: διὰ τί ἄναρχος καὶ ἀτελεύτητος ὁ διάλογος; ἢ ὅτι καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἀπερίγραφόν τε καὶ μήτε ἀρχὴν ἔχον μήτε τέλος· αὐτὸ γὰρ ὂν ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος τίνα ἂν ἀρχὴν ἔχοι ἢ τίνα τελευτήν; Ἀλλ᾽ ἀπορήσειεν ἄν τις ὡς ἐχρῆν αὐτὸ τοὐναντίον ἀρχήν τε ἔχειν καὶ τελευτήν, ἀρχὴν μὲν τοιαύτην ἧς προτέρα οὐκ ἄλλη ἀρχή, τέλος δὲ οὗ ἐπέκεινα οὐκ ἄλλο τέλος. μήποτε οὖν ὀρθῶς φησὶν ὁ ἡμέτερος καθηγεμὼν ἄμεινον εἶναι τὸν μικτὸν βίον μικτὸν ἔχειν τέλος, καὶ τοιοῦτον οἷον ἅπασι ζῴοις πρέπον· ὥστε εἰκότως ἀρχὴν μὲν οὐκ ἔχει πρὸς ἔνδειξιν τοῦ εἶναι περαιτέρω τὶ ἀγαθόν, τέλος δὲ πάλιν οὐκ ἔχει διὰ τὸ αὐτό· ἔστι γὰρ αὐτοῦ τις ἄλλη πρεσβυτέρα ἀρχή τε καὶ τελευτή.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

superior human lives in a quasi-mathematical fashion from first to last (fifth or sixth; 66a-c), we are left with a sense of inadequacy and relative indeterminacy. The end of the *Philebus* indicates that it may not contain the last word on the tremendously important issue of the best human life. Though explicitly open-ended, the *Philebus* is not aporetic, however. No matter what else it may contain, the best human life, we learn from the dialogue, must contain moderation (μέτρον καὶ τὸ μέτριον καὶ καίριον), right proportion, beauty, wholeness, and sufficiency (τὸ σύμμετρον καὶ καλὸν καὶ τὸ τέλεον καὶ ἱκανόν), understanding and wisdom (νοῦν τε καὶ φρόνησιν) in various domains (ἐπιστήμας τε καὶ τέχνας καὶ δόξας ὀρθάς) as well as the pure and unmixed pleasures (ἀλύπους ἡδονὰς καθαράς) of learning and aesthetic gratification which distinguish the characteristically human from the merely animal sort of sensual existence.

From a literary point of view the *Philebus* is like the *Phaedrus*: they are both dramatic dialogues. They are also similar in that no precise dramatic date is given to either by the author – I think, intentionally. About the dramatic date of the *Philebus* we can have no clue whatsoever since of all Platonic dialogues featuring Socrates this one is unique in lacking dramatic details. The dramatic date of the *Phaedrus* has been hotly debated.[28] The information provided in the dialogue, even if read in the context of contemporary Athenian history, cannot lead to any firm conclusion. We know that Phaedrus was exiled from Athens as a result of his involvement in the profanation of the Eleusinian mysteries (415 B.C.) but we do not know when he turned back.[29] We also know that the dramatic date of the *Phaedrus* assumes that Polemarchus, Lysias' brother who died at the hands of the Thirty Tyrants (404 B.C.), is still alive (257b), and so are also Euripides (d. 406 B.C.) and Sophocles (d. 405 B.C.; 268c). Some doctrinal issues about *eros* in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* would prompt us to think that Socrates' conversation with Phaedrus at the banks of Ilyssus is meant to postdate, and elaborate on, Socrates' teaching in the *Symposium*: (i) the theory of Forms, which is introduced as a novel suggestion in the *Symposium* (210d-211e), is in the *Phaedrus* taken for granted (247c-e), (ii) the tripartite

28 Nails (2002) 314 sides with Dover who opted for 418–415 B.C. but mentions other possibilities as well, including a deliberately imprecise date. Yunis (2011) 7–10 rightly explains why the dialogue's references to Phaedrus' being a young man or a potential *eromenos* of Socrates should not be taken literally, but he does not make an attempt to specify the dramatic date beyond 'a general, imprecise sense of the last ten or fifteen years of the fifth century, at which Phaedrus would be in his thirties or forties'.

29 Most scholars assume that Phaedrus returned to Athens with the general amnesty of 403 B.C. But this is just an assumption. Phaedrus' offence was a religious, not a political, misconduct, and though religious and political crimes were not very sharply distinguished in fifth-century Athens, it is not unimaginable that he returned much earlier.

division of the soul in Socrates' palinode (246b) is an obvious elaboration over the simple soul of the lover throughout the *Symposium*, (iii) the introduction of the related ideas of the discarnate soul's prenatal existence and of knowledge as recollection in the *Phaedrus* (248c-249c) provides the required assumptions for understanding how the lover manages to move from one stepping-stone to the next as he ascends the ladder of love in the *Symposium* (210a-212a), (iv) the pre-eminent role accorded to sight in enabling us to reach the realm of Forms, the paramount clarity and vividness of the earthly instantiations of the Form of Beauty, and the corresponding distinction of the Form of Beauty in comparison with other Forms in the *Phaedrus* (250b-d) go a long way into highlighting the explicit relation between erotic love and philosophy that is mentioned but not fully explained in the *Symposium* (204b). For all these reasons, a dramatic date of the *Phaedrus* around or nearly after 407 B.C. when Phaedrus might have been back to Athens from the exile he suffered as a consequence of his involvement in the profanation of the Eleusinian mysteries, would seem more appropriate than one around 418 B.C.

Be that as it may, it is clear that both the *Philebus* and the *Phaedrus* elicit an aura of *timelessness*. Their dramatic differences are that (i) the *Philebus* involves three whereas the *Phaedrus* just two interlocutors, (ii) the former is conducted at no specified place but presumably indoors whereas the latter explicitly takes place at an idyllic spot on the bank of Ilissus in the countryside of Athens, and (iii) though the subject discussed involves pleasure no erotic undertones appear in the *Philebus* as they unquestionably do in the *Phaedrus*. Dramatically the more vivid and well-delineated of the two is, no doubt, the *Phaedrus*. In the *Philebus* the two main characters are not fully-fledged human beings, as in the *Phaedrus*, but rather mouthpieces of claims and counterclaims, arguments and counterarguments.

The *Phaedrus* exhibits one of the most memorable preludes in the whole Platonic corpus. The accidental meeting of the two persons of the dialogue near the temple of Olympian Zeus instigates a long walk along the Ilissus river and a vivid description of vegetation, shrines and non-urban landscape (229a-b, 230b-c). This is, notoriously, the sole instance in the whole Platonic corpus where the beauty of nature is enthusiastically praised. In all other cases, with the exception of the late *Laws* (where dramatic details are minimal), Platonic dialogues take place in urban milieus. Obviously, the setting of the dialogue is intimately connected with its subject-matter. But the subject-matter of the *Phaedrus* is manifold. Like the harmony of nature, which according to Heraclitus loves to hide itself,[30] the three or four basic themes of this dialogue

30 *VS* 22 B 123 DK, cf. B 54.

(rhetoric, love, dialectic, and the art of writing) intertwine in ways not easily discernible. In the very dialogue in which the organic unity of a work of prose art is so emphatically stressed (264c) thematic unity is, on the face of it, lost out of sight.

But is the *Phaedrus* really a patchwork? If its unity does not surface as evident on first or second reading it is because the *Phaedrus* so wonderfully imitates the natural setting in which it is artfully placed that its hidden harmony becomes all the more potent for that. The admirable characterisation of the participants, the vividness of their verbal interchange, the artful description of the itinerary and its divine inhabitants, the masterful imitation of Lysias' style, the almost medical anatomy of the psychology of the lover, the excited description of the supra-celestial sphere, and all the other elements that go a long way into explaining the appeal of this dialogue to various audiences over the centuries are the external allurements or benevolent snares that aim at seducing the reader to philosophy. The unity of the *Phaedrus* is the internal and organic unity of a living thing, not the external and imposed unity of inanimate artworks like Lysias' speech carefully planned in advance but devoid of the spirit of exuberant life. The exodus of the dialogue bears that out (279b-c). Socrates prays specifically to Pan and anonymously to the other local deities to grant him internal beauty, and to harmonise his external possessions with his inner being. The difference of the outer from the inner is here emphatically stressed. As Yunis stresses, '[t]he opening of this prayer at the end of the dialogue [ὦ φίλε Πάν] recalls the opening of Socrates' prayer to Eros at the end of the palinode, ὦ φίλε Ἔρως (257a2)'.[31] In both cases Socrates implicitly juxtaposes irresponsible and selfish sensuality to the inner beauty of philosophy and wisdom. But notice that Pan is a hybrid god of nature, half a he-goat and half a man. Earlier in the dialogue Socrates refused to pronounce on the truth or otherwise of the allegorical interpretations of myth because, as he then said (230a), he had more urgent things to search for, such as whether he is a beast more complex and furious than the monstrous Typhon or a tamer and simpler kind of animal somewhat partaking of divine nature. The prayer to Pan is the prayer to a deity that, his divinity notwithstanding, partakes of animal life nonetheless. Socrates asks the god to grant him inner beauty and to make his notoriously ugly, almost animal-like countenance conform to that beauty. The danger of an animal-looking creature to degenerate into a purely instinctual being, we are meant to think, is great.[32] But Socrates is well

31 Yunis (2011) 247.

32 Cf. the story reported by later authors (Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 171.11-16 Bruns, Eus. *PE* 6.9.22, 4–8 Mras), according to which Socrates supported the ostensively false verdict of the

- 978-90-04-44399-0

aware of the danger and takes his precautions after he has done his part, i.e. after he has sufficiently pondered on beauty and seen its transcendent origin. Phaedrus agrees and eagerly endorses the prayer. The single last word of the dialogue (ἴωμεν) is uttered by Socrates. It reiterates Phaedrus' earlier but more down-to-earth suggestion (279b4) that they should go 'since the heat has become less oppressive', and is an indication that the conversation has come to a satisfactory completion. The interlocutors leave the idyllic bank of Ilissus to encounter urban life anew in a regenerated spirit. It was not their contact with nature *per se* but their contact with a nature filled with intelligible discourses that has purified their souls of the cheap utilitarian approach of the first two speeches and has initiated them to the Nympholeptic madness of sublimated love coupled with true knowledge in the rest of the dialogue.[33] Exhortation to philosophy equals in large part exhortation to self-knowledge and self-improvement.

physiognomy expert Zopyros who had traced Socrates' conduct in life from his physical appearance in an entirely inaccurate way. To the great surprise of his friends and disciples who hastened to ridicule Zopyros' self-professed expertise, Socrates claimed that the judgement was right in so far as his natural disposition was concerned (ὅσον ἐπὶ τῇ φύσει): he had only managed to overcome his nature by the practice of philosophy (διὰ τὴν ἐκ φιλοσοφίας ἄσκησιν). The story, in all likelihood fabricated, indicates the deeply perplexing disharmony between Socrates' notorious ugly face and his ethically and intellectually beautiful mind which the beginning of Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium* (215a-b) also highlights.

33 The significance of the unique setting of the *Phaedrus* has been the subject of controversy from antiquity to the present: cf., e.g., Herm. *In Phdr.* 14.1-3: τὸ δὲ «πορεύομαι ἔξω τοῦ τείχους πρὸς περίπατον» δηλοῖ ὅτι πρὸς κρείττονα τινὰ καὶ ὑπερτέραν ζωὴν μέλλει ἰέναι καὶ οἷον παρὰ τοὺς πολλούς and 19.13-16: ὥσπερ γὰρ τῆς τὸ νοητὸν κάλλος ζητούσης ψυχῆς τροφή τις ὡσανεὶ ἡ ἐρημία καὶ ἡσυχία γίνεται, οὕτω τῆς τῷ φαινομένῳ προσεχούσης ὁ πλήθων ὄχλος καὶ οἱ πολιτικοὶ θόρυβοι with De Sanctis (2016) 124: 'Far from the streets of Athens, Socrates instead is bewildered. At the beginning of the *Phaedrus*, near Ilissus, the countryside opens out before the eyes of Socrates and Phaedrus, but in the *Phaedrus* the countryside does not figure as an attractive place. Little by little, in the fresh country greenness of the grass and the sun- and cicada-filled trees, the flames of a dangerous ambiguity are ready to crackle, if there is no-one present that knows how to converse properly'; 125: 'At first sight this countryside is luxuriant, sunny and bewitching. Bit by bit, however, with regard to such lush countryside, Socrates, citizen *par excellence*, betrays decided embarrassment. Despite the spectacle being so charming, for Socrates the scenery around Ilissus provokes his irony, because it is a place where man's presence fades, and along with it, therefore, any kind of research into understanding him. Socrates is desirous of learning, he is a φιλομαθής: while the countryside and the trees are not capable of teaching, διδάσκειν, Socrates reminds us that teaching can only come from men who live in the city, οἱ δ' ἐν τῷ ἄστει ἄνθρωποι (230d3-5)'.

3 A Broader Perspective

Let us now take a broader perspective on the third Thrasyllan tetralogy as a whole. The question we raised at the beginning of this chapter concerned the unity of the tetralogy – not, of course, the unity of the four dialogues in Plato's mind, which cannot be decided, but their unity for Thrasyllus (or Derkyllidas) who decided to put them together and arrange them in the order we have them. To be sure, Thrasyllus believed that the tetralogic arrangement went back to Plato and that it was the philosopher himself who 'published the dialogues according to tragic [= theatrical/dramatic] tetralogy'.[34] But this is hardly credible. As a matter of fact, Thrasyllus would have little editorial work to do if the Platonic corpus had reached him already arranged in tetralogies. We know that prior to Thrasyllus some scholars, among whom the name of Aristophanes of Byzantium stands out, had arranged Platonic dialogues in trilogies.[35] Thrasyllus' innovation was that he rejected a purely dramatic arrangement in favour of one that would make more philosophical sense.[36] The arrangement of the Platonic corpus that we have is definitely his. And the unity of the third tetralogy that we are looking for is one that would make sense at least to *his* mind.

From a rather external point of view we note, first, that a cross rhyme is formed between the first and third, the second and fourth dialogues: the *Parmenides* and the *Symposium* are narrated dialogues, the *Philebus* and the *Phaedrus* straightforwardly dramatic. We also note, second, that the two narrated dialogues provide the reported conversations with specific dramatic dates (450 B.C. and 416 B.C., respectively), whereas the two dramatic dialogues are imprecise in that respect.

If the dramatic date of the *Phaedrus* postdates that of the *Symposium* (as argued above), we may also note, third, that the arrangement of the four dialogues in a tetralogy is likely to reflect the dramatic dates of the main discussions (as distinguished from the frames). As we read the tetralogy we move from the early *Parmenides*, when Socrates is young, to the chronologically unspecified *Philebus*, then to the precisely datable *Symposium*, when Socrates is mature, to end up with the *Phaedrus*, when the philosopher has reached old age.[37] With

34 Diog. Laert. 3.56: Θράσυλλος δέ φησι καὶ κατὰ τὴν τραγικὴν τετραλογίαν ἐκδοῦναι αὐτὸν [sc. Πλάτωνα] τοὺς διαλόγους.

35 Diog. Laert. 3.61.

36 Tarrant (1993) 103–107.

37 The reading of the Platonic dialogues according to their dramatic dates is the main interpretative principle of Zuckert (2009) 7, 11, 17, *passim*. It is not, however, entirely clear why she places the dramatic date of the *Laws* (followed by *Epinomis*) as early as 460-450

- 978-90-04-44399-0

the possible exception of some remarks about political speech writing in the *Phaedrus* (257c-258d), the whole tetralogy makes no reference to political theory or practice. Three dialogues that deal primarily with ethical themes (the good life, erotic love, and the noble/beautiful in its various aspects) are prefaced by a 'logical' dialogue (as its ancient characterisation has it) that treats the problem of participation and the consequences of the postulation of Forms.

The formal cross rhyme produced between the *Parmenides* and the *Symposium* is underlined by the role that the sudden moment (ἐξαίφνης) plays in both of them and, more precisely, in the short but extremely significant third deduction of the second part of the former (*Prm.* 155e-157b), and in the philosophical apex of the latter (*Symp.* 210e, ingeniously stressed by three other occurrences in the rest of the dialogue: 212c, 213c, 223b).[38] It does not seem to be accidental that the two dialogues dramatically play with the notion of chance, too. At the beginning of the *Parmenides* (126a) Cephalus says that he and his compatriots accidentally *bumped into* (ἐνετύχομεν) Adeimantus and Glaucon who then brought the Clazomenian strangers to Antiphon, the reporter of the conversation to follow. At the beginning of the *Symposium* (172a) Apollodorus tells his friends that he is well prepared to narrate what happened at the house of Agathon because two days before he accidentally *bumped into* Glaucon (καὶ γὰρ ἐνετύγχανον πρῴην εἰς ἄστυ οἴκοθεν ἀνιὼν Φαληρόθεν) who asked him to do so. In both cases the chance encounters are presented by the author as meaningful coincidences (in something like the Jungian sense of the term) since both the Cephalus of the *Parmenides* and the Glaucon of the *Symposium* admit to have been looking for the person(s) whom they accidentally met. Later in the *Symposium* (174a) we learn that Aristodemus, Apollodorus' main reporter, happened (ἐντυχεῖν) to meet Socrates well dressed, which he rarely did, and asked him where he goes. By means of this chance encounter Aristodemus, invited by Socrates, was able to attend Agathon's dinner-party and thus become its principal reporter. It is also by chance that Alcibiades finds himself placed on the very same couch with Socrates and just next to him (*Symp*. 213b-c), an unsuspected event that instigates the deliverance of the last speech of the *Symposium* – the only one pronounced in a drunkenly inspired, unpremeditated, and truly intimate key. Alcibiades admits always to find Socrates where he least (ἥκιστα) expects him to be, but the overall tone of his speech, and especially

B.C. Absence of any explicit reference to the events and persons associated with the Peloponnesian War and 'to any specific event in Greek political history after Salamis and Plataea' (Zuckert [2009] 53–54) does not constitute a good reason for such an early placement.

38 Cf. Rangos (2014) 538–574.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

its introductory part (215a-216b), indicates that Alcibiades is always *looking for* Socrates, and that it is only through extreme self-discipline (βίᾳ) that he manages to escape from Socrates' presence and influence (216a).

Chance encounters play a prominent role in many Platonic dialogues. As Stephen Halliwell indicates 'almost half the undisputedly authentic dialogues begin, like the *Phaedrus*, with a chance encounter, an encounter that is then turned, often but not always by Socrates' manipulation of circumstances, into an opportunity for reflective enquiry of a kind which soon throws up philosophical concerns'.[39] However, the chance encounters of the kind that the *Phaedrus* and many other Platonic dialogues (e.g. *Euthyphro*, *Lysis*, *Hippias Major*, *Ion*, *Menexenus*) display are different from the chance encounters of the *Parmenides* and the *Symposium*. In the latter cases, Cephalus and Glaucon were consciously and eagerly looking for Glaucon/Adeimantus and Apollodorus, respectively, when they happened to bump into them, in order to learn from them the famous discussions that form the main parts of the dialogues. The only clear case of a similarly meaningful chance encounter stems from the possibly spurious *Theages* (122a), a dialogue in which, perhaps purposefully, 'all of a sudden' (ἐξαίφνης) is contrasted to 'little by little' (κατὰ σμικρόν; 130c), as in the *Symposium* (210e) it is contrasted to 'successively and in the right order' (ἐφεξῆς τε καὶ ὀρθῶς). The chance encounter between Euclides and Terpsion in the frame dialogue of the *Theaetetus* is somewhat similar but not entirely the same, since the unknown reason for which Terpsion says to have been looking for Euclides in the agora of Megara (142a) is certainly different from his interest in Euclides' written report of the conversation Socrates had with Theodorus and Theaetetus some eight (or more)[40] years before (143a). And the chance encounter of Socrates with the two brothers from Chios, Dionysodorus and Euthydemus, is causally related to the intervention of Socrates' 'usual demonic sign' (τὸ εἰωθὸς σημεῖον τὸ δαιμόνιον) and it is, therefore, not accidental in the full sense of the term (*Euth.* 272e; cf. *Alc. I* 103a-b). Hence, although it may be true that almost half of Plato's genuine dialogues present discussions initiated by chance encounters, the role that meaningful contingency plays in the first and third dialogues of the third Thrasyllan tetralogy is unparalleled in its force, and as such it does not seem to be accidental: it looks, rather, like being part and parcel of Plato's authorial intentions. The accidental meetings

39 Halliwell, in this volume.

40 The dramatic date of the frame dialogue is disputed. An earlier generation of scholars placed it in 369 B.C., thirty full years after the reported conversation, but Nails (2002) 276–277, 320–321, with good but not conclusive reasons, thinks that 391 B.C. is more appropriate.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

of the *Parmenides* and the *Symposium* reveal thus a kind of Jungian synchronicity, underlined by the notion of the sudden moment in those dialogues, that brings to the contingency of human affairs the force of the meaningful necessity that is characteristic of logical arguments and, ideally, of a philosophically consistent life. In the case of the *Phaedrus*, by contrast, the chance encounter of the two characters does not exhibit any meaningful purpose, nor does it convey a comparable impression of an inscrutable necessity being at work. And the dramatically unsophisticated *Philebus*, in which no chance encounter is present, does not exude the aura of a purposeful necessity operating in the midst of a real-life situation and causing an important conversation: it is, rather, a carefully designed philosophical treatise on the merits of the best human life, cast in dialogic form.

Let us now review the closures. The two erotic dialogues end in peace and completion. The *Symposium* (223d) has Socrates go back home to rest (οἴκοι ἀναπαύεσθαι); the *Phaedrus* (279c) has the interlocutors leave the idyllic place in a serene and deeply satisfied mood. By contrast, the first two dialogues end in notable suspense. We do not learn how young Socrates reacted to the long and convoluted dialectical exercise of venerable Parmenides at the end of the eponymous dialogue; nor do we learn which, and how serious, Protarchus' question or objection is at the end of the *Philebus*. Two truly doctrinal dialogues are preceded by one doctrinal but open-ended work which is, in turn, preceded by one seemingly doctrinal but essentially aporetic piece. In Thrasyllus' arrangement the *Parmenides* must have been placed at the beginning of the tetralogy because it was presumably seen as a kind of mental purification to be followed by the lesser mysteries of the *Philebus*, the proper initiation of the *Symposium*, and the epoptic vision of the *Phaedrus*. If such was Thrasyllus' intention it would have a strong support in Plato's own texts. For both in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, the religious and specifically mystery-cult overtones are evidently intentional.[41] Introduction to φιλοσοφία, as Plato, contrary to Isocrates, understood the term, involves a period of mental purification accompanied by initiation, first, to the mysteries or perplexities of Being and, then, to their epoptic or full-sighted resolution. By placing the *Parmenides* at the beginning of the third tetralogy Thrasyllus meant to probably indicate its preparatory function.

41 For the use of the terminology of the mysteries in Plato's dialogues, see Riedweg (1987) 1–69. For a rather extreme interpretation of the *Phaedrus* as a dialogue replete with allusions to mystery cults that provide the hidden unity of its three or four main themes (rhetoric, love, beauty, and the critique of writing) and aim to drive the reader to an unspeakable experience or mystic vision, see Schefer (2003).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

If the above suggestion is at all correct, a significant contrast between us and Thrasyllus seems to be the following. We normally take the *Parmenides* to be essentially a critique of the middle-period theory of Forms as expounded in dialogues such the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic*; Thrasyllus presumably took it to be a preliminary dialectical exercise conducted by old Parmenides for the sake of young and inexperienced Socrates that would eventually *lead* to that theory. We take the *Philebus*, and especially its metaphysical digression on limit, unlimited, their mixture and god, to consist essentially of a theory of *principles* that goes beyond, and transcends, the theory of Forms as expounded in middle-period dialogues; Thrasyllus presumably took it as a *prerequisite* step for the formulation of that theory.

In line with what Tarrant has argued,[42] I think that in the third Thrasyllan tetralogy the part of the satyr play was given to the *Parmenides*.[43] It is the only dialogue characterised as 'logical' in a tetralogy otherwise consisting of so-called 'ethical' dialogues.[44] Its old subtitle 'On Forms' (περὶ ἰδεῶν) shows it to be a dialogue that may properly open up a cluster of dialogues dealing with Forms.[45] Notice that all four dialogues in the third Thrasyllan tetralogy present versions of the theory of Forms. And they all, apart from the first, deal with Forms in discussions prompted by primarily *human* concerns such as pleasure and wisdom, beauty and love, and the role of dialectical philosophy (as opposed to rhetoric) in ensuring the best life that a human being can live on earth. If we bypass our all-too-modern preconceptions about intellectual progress as a standard feature of historical time and ignore for a moment the (currently still orthodox) developmental approach to Plato's dialogues, a new picture emerges out of the third Thrasyllan tetralogy. This new picture may not be credible from a historical perspective but it is, nonetheless, philosophically engaging. The preludes and closures of the dialogues that make up the third Thrasyllan tetralogy, if seen in relation to the philosophical discussions that

42 Tarrant (1993) 95.

43 Sansone (2015) has argued that in fifth-century Athens satyr-plays were as likely to be performed *before* as after the tragic trilogies. For a highly original, albeit slightly strained, exploration of the role of satyr drama in Plato see Charalabopoulos (forthcoming).

44 Diog. Laert. 3.50, 3.58.

45 Cf. Tarrant (1993) 94: 'if the *Parmenides* was chiefly about Ideas [i.e. as its second title, *On Ideas*, indicates], then naturally it would serve as a useful preparation for works that would talk of the Ideas of the Good and the Beautiful. The *Philebus*, which follows, relates to it insofar as it picks up the One/Many and Limited/Unlimited themes; its subtitle *On Pleasure* would have linked up well with the themes of the Good and of Desire (= Eros) that follow, while the *Phaedrus*' second title *On Eros* preserves the integrity of the tetralogy far better than the title *On Rhetoric* would have done.'

- 978-90-04-44399-0

they preface or conclude, tell the story of the celebrated life of a Socrates who was preoccupied with the very *same* issues about the essential gist of ever-changing reality from his early youth to his old age, only to find unexpected but fully satisfactory answers, after long dialectical twists and turns, in sudden moments of inspired illumination. And this Socrates may well have been Plato.[46]

46 Gadamer (2000) 248: 'we may assume that the entire production of Plato is a unique portrait, the portrait of Socrates, and that at the same time it also represents a self-portrait of Plato'.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

CHAPTER 13

The Introduction to Plato's *Parmenides*

What Does It Introduce and to Whom?

David Horan

1 Introduction*

Miller describes Plato's 'stage-setting' of the *Parmenides* as 'remarkably intricate and detailed. This is especially so in the opening pages in which Plato provides a series of intermediary *personae* to introduce the conversation proper between Socrates, Zeno and Parmenides'.[1] Miller goes on to make the case that Plato intends us to associate the opening handshake with a similar reference in the poem of the historical Parmenides. He also argues that Plato intends to evoke the *Republic* and to position the *Parmenides* with respect to the *Republic* through the characters he chooses for the respective dialogues, and the extent of their philosophic acumen. He argues that the reference to Clazomenae is intended to allude to Anaxagoras and to invoke his thought as an element for consideration in the dialogue. He also maintains that dialogue is meant to establish Plato's own philosophic status with respect to the Eleatics and to Parmenides himself. In this chapter I do not wish to present any counterarguments to Miller's various claims and arguments; they are all quite attractive and indeed well argued. I would like, however, to explore another possible role for this, admittedly, intricate and detailed introduction.

The *Parmenides* is usually divided into two parts, the exchange between Socrates and Parmenides followed by the lengthy and elaborate discussion between Parmenides and Aristoteles. Allen prefers a division into three parts, for he regards the initial short exchange between Socrates and Zeno (127d-130a) as significant and important in its own right. He has little to say about the introduction which I am considering. However, he points out, rightly in my view, that: 'This final part forms more than two-thirds of the whole; as Diès remarked (*Parménide* 3), the movement of the whole dialogue is directed toward emphasizing and enhancing its importance'.[2] It is this aspect of the introduction, as

* My special thanks go to Pantazis Tselemanis for his great assistance in the preparation of this article and his insight into the role of Clazomenae.

1 Miller (1986) 15.

2 Allen (1997) 75.

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having a role in emphasising and enhancing the final part, that I would like to consider here. Apart from its possible role in emphasising and enhancing the final part, I believe that the introduction also has a part to play in indicating how the reader should use, engage with and understand the final two thirds of the dialogue.[3] There is a marked lack of agreement among scholars about the content and function of the final part of the *Parmenides*. Accordingly, we might expect that study of the introduction could do little to help clear up such great controversy. However, I do believe that the introduction, like all the other material leading up to the final part, 'is directed toward emphasizing and enhancing its importance'.[4] I would now like to suggest a number of ways in which it does this, and perhaps more.

2 Why This Structure?

We have seen that Allen regards the dialogue as falling into three parts: Socrates in conversation with Zeno, Socrates with Parmenides, and finally the part whose importance the other parts emphasise – Parmenides' exposition, with Aristoteles as interlocutor. This is surely a reasonable summary of the dialogue's structure, but we are then left with the question of why Plato did not begin his dialogue at 127d6, omitting the entire introduction? This would take us immediately into what Allen regards as the first part of the dialogue: Socrates' interaction with Zeno. If we fear that this might leave us with no knowledge of who these people are and why they are in Athens, then we might expect the dialogue to begin at 127a7, where Antiphon begins his narration.

If Plato had commenced with Antiphon's narration, he would have omitted the visit of the philosophers from Clazomenae, the characters Adeimantus and Glaucon, the purpose of the visitors, the inclusion of Cephalus in the chain of narrators, Antiphon's experience with the dialogue, his apparent switch from philosophy to horses, and his reluctance to recount the details of that famous encounter. Had Plato begun at 127d6 where Socrates begins to question Zeno, he would have omitted the pen portraits of Zeno and Parmenides, Socrates' desire to hear the contents of Zeno's book, and the dramatic details of the reading.

If Plato's primary intention in the *Parmenides* was solely to present the philosophic content described by Allen, what does this earlier material add to

3 For a similar claim, see Brumbaugh (1961) 26.
4 Allen (1997) 75.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

his purpose? The very large overall question of Plato's preference for, and use of, the dialogue format cannot be considered here, but we need to consider some of the complications that accompany Plato's use of this medium. Rowe maintains that:

> We need to remember … that a written dialogue possesses two extra dimensions, one of which will always, and the other will usually, be absent from a real dialogue, i.e. from any live conversation …: (1) an author, and (2) an audience. It is hardly in doubt that Plato constructed and wrote his dialogues for an audience (or audiences), given the earnestness with which his main speakers address their interlocutors. He had a purpose in writing – he had things he wanted to say to his audience, ways in which he wanted to affect them.[5]

I wish to focus on two aspects of this for particular consideration: Plato's intended audience, and what he wished to say to them. Given the size of the introduction, Plato cannot say very much to his audience, and can hardly be said to present any of the dialogue's philosophical content. And yet the hand of Plato is immediately evident, insofar as 'he could set up the conversation as he liked, where he liked, and between whatever characters/interlocutors he liked'.[6] So once we begin to read his dialogue we are in his hands and he is controlling what is presented to us and the manner in which it is presented. Behind all this, surely, lies some purpose.

The first two parts of the dialogue are connected argumentatively with, and culminate in, the final part, as far as the development of the philosophic structure of the dialogue is concerned. We can see the development of an overall argument from Socrates' exchange with Zeno, through to Parmenides' dialectical discussion with Aristoteles, regardless of how much dispute there may be over the details. It is hard to see, however, how our brief introduction contributes in any way to the internal structure of the overall philosophic content within the dialogue itself. If the introduction serves little direct purpose internal to the *Parmenides* itself, then we might surmise that it serves a purpose external to the dialogue. In that case we might conclude that one of Plato's purposes in starting with this introduction is to communicate with the reader. What might he wish to communicate?

5 Rowe (2007) 9.
6 Rowe (2007) 9–10.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

3 The Chain of Narrators

Plato first shows his own hand by presenting us with another voice, in the person of Cephalus, the last narrator in a chain of narrators. By the time the introduction finishes this narrator, our immediate narrator after Plato himself, will be replaced by another one: Plato's half-brother. But he, in turn, will merely be relating what he too heard from someone else, someone who was actually present at the meeting. What possible role could this chain of narration play in 'emphasizing and enhancing' the importance of the final two thirds of the dialogue, as per Allen's understanding? What precisely might such a construction convey to Plato's audience or how might it affect them, as per Rowe's understanding? Cornford makes the somewhat deflationary suggestion that: '[Plato] may have felt that the elaborate explanation of how it came to be handed down might help the reader to overlook the impossibility that a conversation even remotely resembling this one should ever have occurred'.[7] Whether we take Plato's account as having some basis in historical fact, or prefer to regard it as philosophic fiction, matters little for our purposes. The fact that Plato inserts such a narrative chain is surely telling the reader that Plato regards this as significant in some way – otherwise why bother to include it? In committing these arguments to writing, Plato is doing what Parmenides, Pythodorus, Antiphon and, apparently, Cephalus, have avoided doing. But although he is committing the arguments to writing, even while doing so, Plato is making their original, traditional, oral pedigree quite explicit. Rowe argues that such dramatic details are too obtrusive to constitute mere ornamentation.[8] At the very least, Plato is making the obvious point that there are two means of transmitting the details of such philosophic discussions: the oral and the written. He is also informing us that his own use of the written medium is, perhaps, the first departure from that oral tradition in the case of these arguments. Why has he broken with the oral tradition? In departing from the oral tradition is he showing partiality to the written tradition or is he telling the reader something about that original tradition?

Although various answers to these questions suggest themselves, there is one that is supported by the text itself. Plato presents us with Cephalus, back in Clazomenae or its vicinity, recounting a famous encounter of famous men. When the Ionian visitors came to Athens, there was only one man remaining who knew the details of what had transpired at that great gathering, namely

7 Cornford (1939) 64.
8 Rowe (2007) 11.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Antiphon. But Antiphon's interest had, by then, already shifted to horses. The oral tradition in Athens was already waning in this case, and by the time Plato came to develop a written account, it is not unreasonable to assume that this original tradition must have been under serious threat. But this is surely no surprise to anyone who manages to read Plato's written dialogue in its entirety. Speaking of the first hypothesis Cornford remarks that 'the language throughout is as dry and prosaic as a textbook of algebra …'[9] It is hardly surprising that an oral tradition of dry prosaic language might be difficult to sustain. Indeed, we might wonder how it ever got established in the first place.

Explicit oral chains of narration are few in Plato. In the *Symposium*, the original account of the subject-matter, highly entertaining and far from dry and prosaic, has been verified with Socrates by Aristodemus,[10] but our narrator, Apollodorus, cannot recall all of the speeches and freely confesses that some of his accounts are partial.[11] In the *Theaetetus*, the account has already been written down and verified, with Socrates, by Euclides.[12] In the *Phaedo*, the eponymous narrator was present at Socrates' death; but he cannot recall the names of all who were present, or who raised the objection mentioned at 103a4-5. He focusses entirely upon exchanges involving Socrates and is delighted to have the opportunity to recount these to Echecrates. None of these narrators face the challenges of a *Parmenides* narrator.

So the *Parmenides* is unique in the emphasis placed upon oral transmission and recounting from memory, especially in the light of the fact that the material presents such extreme challenges. We are told that Antiphon heard the dialogue many times from Pythodorus, that he studied it carefully, and that it is a major undertaking for him to recount it. The reported chain of narration is longer than in any other Platonic dialogue and, if Antiphon is dead by the time Plato writes the *Parmenides*,[13] then there are no surviving narrators in Athens. This is a precarious tradition, be it historical or be it fictional. Even if we take it as a tradition that Plato is largely fabricating, we may still ask what message such an account is intended to convey. A tradition, whereby some famous philosophic arguments are studied closely and transmitted orally has, by the time Plato writes, no surviving representatives in Athens. It seems too, that the only demand for Antiphon's services as a narrator, later in his life, came from

9 Cornford (1939) 131.

10 *Symp.* 173b4-6. On the 'veracity of the narrative' in this particular case, see Bury (1932) xvi-xviii; Dover (1980) 8–10.

11 *Symp.* 178a1-5, 180c1-2, 223c6-d2.

12 *Tht.* 143a3-4.

13 Taylor (1934) 43; Nails (2002) 31.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Ionia – apparently no Athenian had enquired about this famous discussion from the only fellow Athenian who knew about it, namely Antiphon. Regardless of the historicity of the account, there is surely a very strong suggestion in the *Parmenides* that serious interest in philosophy comes from overseas, and that the living tradition in Athens is fading.[14] Against this background, how may we understand Plato's role as a writer and the message he wishes to convey?

We may surely surmise that as the oral living tradition of study and recollection of the arguments fades, Plato would see a role for writing. Writing might ensure that what had been preserved orally in previous years could now be preserved in his written dialogue. But interaction with a written work is very different from the verbal process of recollecting philosophic arguments and studying them closely, again through a verbal process. So the reader with no experience of that original oral tradition, is left with the question of how to use this book and to what purpose.

Cornford's comparison with an algebra textbook provides, I suggest, a clue to Plato's possible intention here. Good students of algebra do not learn the textbook by heart – they learn how to do algebra. The weaker students may well try to memorise textbook sections. Preserving a tradition of algebra textbook memorisation would be a most bizarre exercise. And, by analogy, in the case of this dialogue it is most unlikely that Plato intended that his written work should be the basis for restoring the oral tradition merely through memorisation of his dialogue. The only people who can readily recount the material found in an algebra textbook are those who are naturally able to do algebra. And, if our analogy holds, perhaps the only people who can readily recount the contents of this famous discussion are those who are naturally able to do philosophy. The text provides some supporting evidence for such a suggestion.

4 Serious Philosophers

We have noted the improbability of anyone ever remembering the details of what Plato sets out in the *Parmenides*, with all its apparent dryness, in the absence of some understanding of, and interest in, the underlying subject-matter in question. It should come as no surprise then that the visitors are said to be serious philosophers – μάλα φιλόσοφοι.[15] The *ξένος* in the *Sophist* is introduced

14 Cf. Socrates' opening remark in the *Meno* 70c3-71a1.

15 *Prm.* 128b8.

in a similar manner,[16] and he too demonstrates familiarity with Parmenides and his thought. We may now discern some significance in Plato's granting such status to those who are interested in the arguments detailed in the *Parmenides*. Is Plato, through the use of this phrase to describe those who are to hear these arguments, indicating the sort of reader for whom this discussion is appropriate? Or is he indicating the use to which the written dialogue should be put by the reader? Or is he doing both?

Let's go back to algebra textbooks for a moment. Trained mathematicians can recount the details of the textbook without needing to memorise its contents. Their understanding will tell them what should appear under various headings such as 'quadratic equations' and 'complex numbers'. Those without training are most unlikely to be able to remember the contents unless they specialise in feats of memory. But they will also lack the understanding required to tell what should appear under these various headings. They would be the mathematical equivalent of poor philosophers, while those with training would correspond to the serious philosophers, the μάλα φιλόσοφοι from Ionia.

Miller connects our introduction to the *Republic* via the persons of Adeimantus and Glaucon, but remarks that these two are 'uneducated in philosophy themselves'.[17] However, we need not refer to the *Republic* for such evidence, as we find, in our introduction, that the two brothers must introduce the keen philosophers from Ionia to their own half-brother, Antiphon, in order to satisfy the request of the visitors. The visitors themselves are also aware of the respective philosophic acumen of the native Athenians and so they do not ask either Adeimantus or Glaucon to give an account of Socrates' conversation with Parmenides, they ask instead for access to Antiphon, knowing that he alone can meet their need. The three Athenians are obviously in contact with one another, they have met earlier in the day. But neither Adeimantus nor Glaucon appear to have been interested enough in Parmenides' visit and the associated meeting to learn the arguments from Antiphon, their own half-brother, let alone to study them or commit them to memory. Antiphon, for his part, is no longer devoted to philosophy, his interest has shifted to horses. This all paints a poor picture of the level of interest in philosophy of this sort in Athens at the time.

I think we may safely surmise that Plato is indicating that what follows will be unsuited to those who are not serious philosophers, and this evidently includes certain figures in Plato's own family circle. But who does he have

16 *Soph.* 216a4.
17 Miller (1986) 19.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

in mind as his readers, and what should they do? Should they too be serious philosophers? In Plato's time geometry rather than algebra would have been the most significant branch of mathematics. In the *Theaetetus* we are told the story of a great mathematician and geometer, Theaetetus himself. Plato describes how this young man was able to proceed, step by step, from the multiple examples of incommensurability given by his teacher Theodorus, to a general theory of incommensurability.[18] This ability to engage with the subject, solve problems, and develop general theories, is what makes someone a serious practitioner of any subject. Shouldn't the same apply to philosophy? The ultimate measure of being a serious philosopher should not lie, for a reader, in the mere ability to memorise Plato's text. The serious philosopher, like the trained mathematician, should be someone who can recount the details of the arguments from a genuine understanding of and familiarity with the underlying principles, respond to objections, develop new arguments and defend them.

Plato is committing the arguments to writing but even while doing so he makes their living oral pedigree quite explicit. Having noted this requirement for serious philosophers among the characters in the *Parmenides*, we should ask what use Plato expects his readers to make of this written text. Plato has, I believe, given us some assistance here. We are told of the use made by Socrates himself of the only written text present in the encounter itself – Zeno's book. This, I suggest, may well be intended by Plato as a model for the reader's interaction with, and use of, the *Parmenides* itself.

5 Zeno's Book

At 127c1-3 Socrates and others have come to Pythodorus' house,[19] wishing to hear Zeno's book (τῶν τοῦ Ζήνωνος γραμμάτων).[20] It is the book's first airing in Athens and it is read to the audience by its author. We need only move a few lines beyond the introduction to find out what part the book plays in the

18 *Tht.* 147d3-148b4. Cf. Sedley (2004) 27–28.

19 Where the Eleatic *ξένοι* are hosted. While the connection of Pythodorus with Magna Graecia is sufficiently attested by Thucydides, there is no agreement as to how much information about him is really at our disposal, either from Thucydides or from other sources, since the name is not uncommon. See Nails (2002) 259–260; most of the basics were distilled in Gomme (1956) 430 (on Thuc. 3.115.2), Gomme (1974) 524 (on Thuc. 4.65.3) and 679 (on Thuc. 5.19.2), the rest in Davies (1971) 481.

20 It is not essential for the purposes of this chapter to decide whether to accept the insertion of an *οὐ* after *αὐτοῦ* at 127c2. See Taylor (1934) 45, n.2.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

ensuing action. Socrates asks for a particular section to be reread and he then gives a summary thereof, asks Zeno to confirm its accuracy, and initiates a discussion about it. Zeno's book is supportive of the philosophy of his master Parmenides. Indeed, the repeated references to writing are striking: within 127c3-128e2 there are fifteen occurrences of a word indicating a written work or writing (γράμμα, γράφω, σύγγραμμα), and none thereafter at all. Plato is certainly drawing our attention, emphatically, to the existence of this written work and to the fact that the person who has written the work is present for the discussion of that work.

Solmsen draws attention to the manner in which Plato makes use of Zeno's book. He highlights the way Socrates engages with the book:

> After making Zeno repeat something that he said in his treatise, he quite tentatively goes first one step and then another beyond the actual words, and while thus advancing *pedetemptim* asks at each stage: 'is this what you mean?' (127e4; 128a1) or 'is this the purpose of your arguments' (127e8 ff.)? Could it be made clearer that we are moving into the realm of 'interpretation' (what may be less clear is where the report ends and where interpretation takes over)?[21]

Going step by step beyond the actual words, Socrates begins his discussion with Zeno which ultimately unfolds into Plato's entire dialogue. Allen emphasises this very continuity which, he says, begins with the exchange between Socrates and Zeno. But that exchange has its origin, in turn, in the reading of Zeno's book and Socrates' response thereto in a manner which, as Solmsen points out, goes beyond the actual words of that book. Socrates presents his own understanding of Zeno's arguments, to Zeno himself, for confirmation that his understanding is correct, and he then begins a very forthright critique of those very arguments. Is Plato showing us how to use a written philosophic text? Should we come to an understanding, move away from the actual text, and formulate our own understanding in our own words, verify this understanding against the original text, and then begin to consider the truth or untruth of what has been said through arguments of our own devising? If this is indeed Plato's intention, then it is surely probable that he intends his own readers to use this dialogue, the *Parmenides*, in the very same way. Is Plato's written work therefore being presented as a basis upon which we, the readers, may return to something resembling the original tradition of oral argument? In that case, as

21 Solmsen (1974) 370.

McCabe puts it, this dialogue 'is one which we join, in which we dispute, where we too take an active part in the argument'.[22]

Plato gives us two indications that such an approach is indeed his intention. The first has already been considered, namely the manner in which he shows Socrates engaging with Zeno's book. However, there is one significant difference between Socrates' engagement with Zeno's book and our interaction with Plato's dialogue. Socrates was able to put questions to Zeno, the author of the book, its 'father'.[23] Socrates was able to check his own understanding of Zeno's text by questioning the man who wrote it. Zeno's responses and the subsequent discussion, face Socrates, Zeno and the reader with arguments and *aporias* that do not feature directly in the original book. But when we read the *Parmenides* today, Plato is not present, so all the philosophic exploration and development which took place in the Ceramicus at the original meeting is not directly available to us through a similar process. But we still have Plato's dramatic description, fictional or fact based, of what can come of a meeting at which such a book is discussed. Rowe suggests that: 'there will be very little that is in the proper sense *dialogical* about Plato's dialogues (with that one exception, that dialectical exchanges within them may serve as static models for the real thing, i.e. live dialectic, and might even accurately portray examples of it; but that is a different matter)'.[24] A full discussion of Rowe's suggestion would take us beyond our present remit. But, in the introduction, we are certainly faced with a contrast between the 'live dialectic' which took place at the original meeting, and which the Ionians wish to recapture, and 'static models' in the form of Zeno's book, and the very dialogue we are reading.

Are we given any further indications, in the introduction, as to how Plato's static written model might portray examples of real dialectic? One possible indication might lie in what he tells us about Antiphon who, although his interests have changed, was once very interested in the arguments described in this dialogue.

6 Practice, Not Memory

We are told that Antiphon heard the arguments many times from Pythodorus, that he can recite them from memory, and that he practised them quite

22 McCabe (1996) 7.

23 *Phdr*. 275e4. There is an obvious and significant connection to the *Phaedrus* here, arising from the reference to Zeno's written work and the absence of any prior written account of the famous arguments. To explore these issues would be beyond the scope of this article.

24 Rowe (2007) 32.

thoroughly (εὖ μάλα διεμελέτησεν) when he was young.[25] Returning to our example of the algebra textbook, it is, in my view,[26] quite improbable that Antiphon's time with Pythodorus was spent purely in learning these arguments by heart. We can hardly believe either, that Pythodorus himself memorised the arguments *verbatim* even if he had additional opportunities to spend time with Parmenides, Zeno (and perhaps Socrates) and hear the arguments again. We may also question whether Plato seriously wants us to believe that his own half-brother really did have such familiarity with the details of this great philosophic discourse. But even if we take these details as part of Plato's manner of philosophic writing, we must surely accept Rowe's point that details of this nature are too obtrusive to constitute mere ornamentation.[27] If they are not mere ornamentation, then they must serve some serious purpose, and this purpose should now be clearer in the light of what we have considered so far.

I have already suggested that Plato presents us with Socrates' use of Zeno's book as a model for the proper engagement, by philosophers, with any philosophical text. I now wish to consider what Plato might have wished to convey to the reader through his depiction of Antiphon and his experience with the arguments. What might reasonably have transpired between Antiphon and Pythodorus? We are told that Antiphon heard the arguments many times, but if we accept that Pythodorus is unlikely to have memorised them *verbatim*, we should assume that Antiphon heard reconstructions of the arguments, as understood by Pythodorus. Such encounters with Pythodorus might have given Antiphon a familiarity with the arguments themselves, their natural sequence and their internal structure. The reader is not therefore being prepared for an exercise of pure recollection. Accordingly, ἀπομνημονεύει should not refer to exact repetition of what was said at the original meeting, as if Pythodorus held some sort of internal mental transcript which he imparted to Antiphon. It would strain credibility to imagine that Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (*Ἀπομνημονεύματα*) contains a precise record of what was said by Socrates and various interlocutors. Indeed, in that very work the same verb is used to tell us of Critias' hatred for Socrates which, 'he bore in mind' (ἀπεμνημόνευσεν)[28] when passing laws.

25 The verb διαμελετῶ is rare; this is one of only three occurrences in Plato, already listed in Ast (1835) 1.485, where '*studeo*' is coupled with '*me exerceo in aliqua re*'. The basic, wider background facts are assembled, for another purpose, in Shorey (1909). Notice also the contrast with *διατρίβει* on the next line.

26 Cf. the pertinent remarks by Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's* Parmenides 681.25–682.3.

27 Rowe (2007) 11.

28 Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.31, trans. Henderson and Marchant (2013).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Since such a lengthy chain of narrators is described here, Plato is more likely to be making the point that, as McCabe puts it:

> There is nothing more privileged in Cephalus' hearing of the story than there is in ours – the distance, if you will, imposed by the Chinese Whispers in this dialogue decreases, rather than increases, our awareness of the distortion to which a told tale is vulnerable.[29]

Since a 'told tale' is obviously vulnerable to distortion, and since the reader will be aware of this fact, Plato is, I suggest, directing the reader's focus away from the notion of accurate, verbatim recounting. If the narrators are not mere philosophic rhapsodes, and if Plato intends us to recognise the improbability of such a feat of memory in this case, then we need to understand what is meant by reciting from memory in this context. Plato, I suggest, wants the reader to appreciate that these narrators must have some genuine understanding of the material in question. By such an understanding they can reconstruct the arguments on each occasion, just as a mathematician may use her understanding of the subject to prove a geometrical theorem, perhaps in a number of different ways, without any need to refer to her memory of a textbook, her lecture notes or the words of her professor.

This point is surely reinforced by the statement that Antiphon practised the arguments to perfection (αὐτοὺς εὖ μάλα διεμελέτησεν).[30] Here Cornford's translation, 'Antiphon worked hard at getting that conversation by heart',[31] would suggest that the effort was one of memorisation rather than understanding. I have explained why I find it improbable that Antiphon's practice was solely aimed at memorisation. But Cornford's version of this phrase may stand, provided we appreciate that such memorisation must be accompanied by an understanding of the arguments and the sort of practice that any geometer or mathematician would undertake. Such practice or study might involve responding to objections, devising alternative proofs, and defending these against further objections. This is the model of practice which would apply to most other subjects – would it not apply in this case too?

No one who is to be proficient in any subject relies upon mere rote learning, and those who rely solely upon mere rote learning tend to lack proficiency in the subject. The thorough practice of the arguments by Antiphon, as reported

29 McCabe (1996) 8.
30 *Prm.* 126c6-7.
31 Cornford (1939) 65.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

in the introduction, seems to be Plato's way of pointing out that the arguments we find in the *Parmenides* do indeed require thorough practice. Antiphon can recite them from memory because of his thorough practice, so perhaps we the readers should practice them thoroughly so that we may have the same familiarity with them as has Antiphon. Is Plato asking us to accept that his half-brother really did have such a facility with the arguments? Perhaps not. Is Plato giving us an indication of what to do with the arguments we find in the dialogue? Perhaps so.

We may note one further piece of evidence that Antiphon's thorough practice in his youth did not involve memorisation alone. We are told that by the time the visitors arrive from Clazomenae Antiphon spends most of his time with horses – his practice of the philosophical arguments was an early pursuit. If we assume then that years have elapsed since he last applied himself to these arguments, we may well understand his reluctance to recount them. He responds at first that what has been asked of him is a lot of work, or a major undertaking (πολύ … ἔργον).[32] The fact that he can recount the arguments at all, after an interval of a number of years, is remarkable in itself and surely supports my contention that he must be relying upon some understanding, derived from his practice or study, as the basis upon which he can recount what is said to have taken place, in such detail. Accordingly, I suggest that Antiphon's πολὺ ἔργον here is not an effort of memory. Antiphon's reluctance in the introduction mirrors, in a most exact manner, Parmenides' own reluctance before the final part of the dialogue.[33] Indeed, Parmenides' reluctance does not relate to his ability to remember some past arguments that he has memorised, or the effort involved in such a process. He says he is daunted, rather, by the prospect of making his way across such a vast and formidable ocean of words or arguments (πέλαγος λόγων),[34] and of having to play what he calls a laborious game (πραγματειώδη παιδιάν).[35]

7 The Search for Arguments

The visitors make a particular request of Adeimantus when they meet him. They wish to hear, from Antiphon, the arguments that were discussed years earlier by Socrates, Zeno and Parmenides. They know that Antiphon can recite these from memory since he had heard them so often from Pythodorus, who

32 *Prm* 127a6.
33 *Prm* 136d6, e8-9.
34 *Prm.* 137a5-6.
35 *Prm.* 137b2. An ἅπαξ εἰρημένον in Plato, listed in Ast (1835) 3.163.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

was present. Although Plato is presenting us with his own written account, it features serious philosophers who are in search of arguments that, they know, have been committed to memory rather than to writing. Whether we take Plato's account as having some basis in historical fact, or prefer to regard it as philosophic fiction, we are still left with the fact that Plato himself is indicating that the *Parmenides* is about arguments that were once discussed (τοὺς λόγους, οὕς … διελέχθησαν), arguments which Antiphon can recite from memory (ἀπομνημονεύει) and which have not, until now, been written down. If we recall Allen's suggestion that 'the movement of the whole dialogue is directed toward emphasizing and enhancing [the final part's] importance',[36] we may now speculate that Plato is, perhaps, trying to do more than just this. He is, at least, telling us that what we meet in the *Parmenides* as a static model of dialectic has, or had, a live counterpart – what Rowe calls 'the real thing'.

The serious philosophers are in search of arguments that were live at the time, rather than written accounts. Socrates and his associates, in contrast, wish to hear the contents of Zeno's written work. But even in this case, Socrates uses Zeno's book to launch a philosophic enquiry that ultimately culminates in the concluding two thirds of this dialogue, its final part, whose importance the preceding parts emphasise and enhance. The introduction thus seems to have a significant role to play in giving such emphasis to the last part. It does so, as we have seen, by showing that a written account, Zeno's book, served only as a starting point for the significant arguments that the serious philosophers wished to hear. But Plato also shows us in the introduction that the serious philosophers, let's say 'real philosophers',[37] are in search of arguments that were discussed, rather than accounts that have been written, so even when Plato introduces a written account, this is just a starting-point for initiating dialectical discussions and arguments – indeed the whole dialectical edifice of which the *Parmenides* is, arguably, a model.

I have been at pains throughout this chapter to translate λόγοι as 'arguments', in the plural. I have avoided the, albeit defensible, practice of Gill and Ryan, and other translators too, of translating the Greek plural noun by a singular noun in English – 'discussion' in the case of Gill and Ryan,[38] 'conversation' in the case of Taylor.[39] Allen adopts the practice I favour,[40] and renders

36 Allen (1997) 75.

37 As Morrow and Dillon (1987) render the phrase μάλα φιλόσοφοι in their translation of the Commentary of Proclus.

38 In this connection, 'discussion' goes back to at least Waddell (1894) 154.

39 In this connection, 'conversation' goes back to at least Maguire (1882) 4.

40 For the general background in which this preference may be firmly located, see the end of the chapter-concluding paragraph in Kapp (1942) 19.

τοὺς λόγους οὓς διελέχθησαν as 'the arguments that once were discussed',[41] and in the light of what I have been arguing, I must prefer his rendering of the text rather than the others. If the Ionian visitors are serious philosophers, then it makes little sense that they have a strong desire to hear a mere conversation, and even if someone insists that this is the case, it is surely the philosophic content of the conversation, namely the λόγοι, that they are truly seeking. But since λόγος and λόγοι have such variety of meanings, even in Plato's own writings,[42] we must surely ask what sort of λόγοι are under consideration here. I believe that Plato uses the intricate and elaborate introduction to inform the reader, at the earliest possible stage, just what sort of λόγοι will be encountered in this dialogue.

Let's digress for a moment and consider λόγοι at the beginning of two other dialogues. In the *Phaedrus*, the relish and enthusiasm for λόγοι is evident from its earliest lines and persists throughout. Socrates has no sooner met Phaedrus than he speculates confidently that 'Lysias was feasting you with all his speeches' (τῶν λόγων ὑμᾶς Λυσίας εἱστία), and refers to himself as 'the one in love with speeches' (τοῦ τῶν λόγων ἐραστοῦ)[43] and as 'sick with passion for hearing speeches' (τῷ νοσοῦντι περὶ λόγων ἀκοήν).[44] The λόγοι here are actual speeches, the famous speech writer, Lysias, is in the background, and both protagonists have great enthusiasm for such λόγοι, and Phaedrus, at least, is quite undiscriminating as to their contents. Thus, we are told from the start that λόγοι of this attractive nature will feature significantly in the *Phaedrus*, and that neither protagonist will be in any way reluctant to engage with them. The *Symposium*, like the *Parmenides*, has a narrator, and the famous speeches that it contains are again called λόγοι. The opening features the request that Apollodorus recount 'their speeches on love' (περὶ τῶν ἐρωτικῶν λόγων).[45] The narrator opens the dialogue by declaring his preparedness to tell the story of what happened, and he shows no reluctance whatsoever at any stage.

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41 Allen (1997) 3. As Waddell once put it: 'In short, it is methodical conversational argument on philosophic questions' (Waddell [1894] 78b, *ad locum*).

42 Cf. the relevant entry in des Places (1964).

43 *Phdr.* 227b6-7, 228c1-2, trans. Rowe (1988). It is easy to misremember this latter phrase as referring to Phaedrus, although this is precluded by the natural reading of the preceding absolute genitive of which τοῦ τῶν λόγων ἐραστοῦ is the grammatical subject; but what follows leaves no room for any doubt that Phaedrus is really an 'inveterate speech-lover', as Waterfield (2002) xxxviii puts it. Cf. the way he ends up presiding unanimously over the proceedings, as πατὴρ τοῦ λόγου, in the *Symposium* (177d5, e6, 194d1, and esp. 199b8-c1).

44 *Phdr*. 228b6-7, trans. Waterfield (2002).

45 *Symp*. 172b3, trans. Waterfield (1994).

Both passages stand in marked contrast to our introduction. In those dialogues we find narrators who are enthusiastic about what they will recount, and who are keen to recount it. In the case of the *Symposium* there is great local demand, in Athens, for a recounting of these λόγοι. In the case of the *Parmenides*, however, Antiphon is highly reluctant to recount the λόγοι, regarding the process as a major undertaking; and Parmenides himself is similarly reluctant, describing the process as a laborious game involving an ocean of λόγοι. In contrast to the local Athenian interest that we find in the *Symposium*, Adeimantus and Glaucon, half-brothers and companions of the man who can recount the famous λόγοι, show no interest in them, and can do no more than introduce the visitors to their sibling – that is the only help they can offer. Only non-Athenians are, apparently, interested in the λόγοι of the *Parmenides*.

Thus, we may fairly conclude that the λόγοι that will feature in the *Parmenides* are very different in nature from those in the other two dialogues. We know the kind of λόγοι that feature in those dialogues and we know that they retain their appeal even today. Taylor describes the *Symposium* as 'perhaps the most brilliant of all Plato's achievements as a dramatic artist',[46] and Waterfield refers to the *Phaedrus* as 'astonishingly rich'.[47] So even in his style and mode of presentation Plato seems to be inviting the reader, in those cases, to expect very appealing and enjoyable material. Cornford, in contrast, says of the *Parmenides* that 'the subject matter of the dialogue is, to the last degree, prosaic; and it is written throughout in the plainest conversational style, as far removed as possible from the lyrical manner of its near neighbour, the *Phaedrus*'.[48]

As already noted, the introduction does not provide any of the philosophical material with which the dialogue is concerned, nor does it contribute any more than a preamble to the initiation of the overall argument. The philosophical action, as Allen points out, begins with Socrates' interrogation of Zeno about the contents of his book. Setting aside, for the moment, that the mention of Clazomenae might possibly be a reference to Anaxagoras, generations of subsequent philosophers would have been quite well able to engage with Plato's *Parmenides* had it commenced at 127d6. I have already argued that the introduction is unlikely to be a mere embellishment – it is far too elaborate for that purpose. Indeed, we have already noted the significance of many of its details and, furthermore, as Cornford points out, embellishment, and artistry of style, are not significant concerns of Plato in this dialogue.

46 Taylor (1929) 209.
47 Waterfield (2002) ix.
48 Cornford (1939) 64.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Plato is taking a lot of trouble here to position the λόγοι of the *Parmenides* as very different from those in the other two more artistic dialogues. The more prosaic style of writing, the lack of local Athenian interest, the reluctance of Antiphon to recount the λόγοι, the fact that the process is a major undertaking, the emphasis that the process is oral and involves memory, all point to the challenging nature of the material, and emphasise to the reader that these λόγοι are for serious philosophers. Such a message from Plato to his readers should also give a reader some preliminary guidance as to what should be done with this material. Thorough study is required and there is a need for repeated hearing. Plato tells the reader that the material is daunting, challenging, but very important. The importance of the material is emphasised by the fact that serious philosophers have come from Clazomenae, perhaps for the sole purpose of hearing λόγοι that were once discussed in Athens. But Plato also took the trouble to write down these λόγοι, and their setting, and details of the protagonists involved, and how they felt about them. This decision shows that Plato wanted to place very strong emphasis indeed upon the importance of these λόγοι.

When Plato sets their importance alongside their difficulty, I think we must assume that he wants his readers to rise to the challenge, without being deterred or discouraged, forge on through the preliminary stages, and tackle the formidable final part of the *Parmenides*. He must want them to summon up their own resources and begin to grapple with this difficult material, in spite of its relative unpopularity, and the hard work involved. Against this background I wish to insist that although the introduction is intricate and extremely nuanced, the details are all highly significant. Plato needs to use a preamble of this kind to alert his readers to the sort of dialogue this is, and how they should set about coming to terms with it.

8 Clazomenae

Because of Anaxagoras prominence in the *Phaedo*, it is natural for any reader of Plato to assume that a mention of Clazomenae constitutes a reference to him, its most significant philosopher.[49] Because Anaxagoras' philosophy was opposed to that of the historical Parmenides in certain respects, it is also natural to assume that, when Plato considers Parmenides and Eleaticism, some consideration of Anaxagoras is to be expected. Brumbaugh speculates that there may have been a degree of interest in Anaxagoras in the Academy at the

49 For a succinct statement of this significance, see Laks and Most (2016) 3.

time Plato wrote the *Parmenides* (traditional date of composition 367 B.C.),[50] perhaps via Eudoxus.[51] Miller also regards Anaxagoras' philosophy as relevant to the dialogue,[52] and Proclus went so far as to refer to the visitors as disciples of Anaxagoras.[53] While I accept the arguments of these scholars, and many others who have elaborated upon and developed these claims, I wonder if there is not, perhaps, a more immediate relevance to the mention of Clazomenae for a citizen of Athens at that time.

I wish to speculate, in concluding this article that there is one other significant event in the more recent history of Athens that might spring to the mind of every Athenian upon mention of Clazomenae. In 387 B.C.,[54] twenty years before Plato wrote this dialogue, there was a general treaty of great humiliation for most of the Greek world and for Athens in particular. The treaty refers to Clazomenae, specifically and prominently, as Xenophon records 'King Artaxerxes thinks it just that the [Greek] cities in Asia should belong to him, as well as Clazomenae and Cyprus among the islands, etc'.[55] This is the opening of the so-called 'peace of Antalcidas' (named after the Spartan envoy),[56] or the King's Peace of 387 B.C.[57] This humiliating treaty would, I suggest, be the first thing to come to the mind of any Athenian on hearing a reference to Clazomenae.[58] The depth of feeling against the treaty may be gauged from Isocrates' *Panegyricus*, published in 380 after many years of gestation.[59] A particularly sore point was the requirement that the treaty be displayed on stone tablets in the sacred places:

> He forced us to write it on stone pillars and set them up in the precincts of the temples, a much finer victory trophy than all those set up after a

50 Guthrie (1978) 34.

51 Brumbaugh (1961) 14 and 19–20. He too takes 367 as the year of composition.

52 Miller (1986) 25–28.

53 *Commentary on Plato's* Parmenides, 625.9-10, 626.11-12 (Steel); Morrow and Dillon (1987) 24, 25.

54 A year which is the *terminus post quem* for the foundation of the Academy. See Guthrie (1975) 19–20.

55 Xen. *Hell.* 5.1.31, trans. Brownson (1918).

56 This treaty, ἡ ἐπ' Ἀνταλκίδου εἰρήνη, 'was a triumph for the Spartans', as Hornblower (2011) 233 puts it. Cf. Underhill (1906) 177 on *Hellenica* 5.1.36.

57 For important background information and cogent assessment, see Ryder (1965) Ch. 2, esp. 27–36 and Appendix I; Cawkwell (1981); Badian (1991).

58 Especially in view of the *rapprochement* between Athens and Clazomenae immediately before Antalcidas concluded the treaty: see the documentary evidence in Harding (1985) 26–27.

59 Papillon (2004) 24, n. 5. Here ten years is suggested as the period of composition.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

> battle. For these resulted from minor actions and a stroke of luck, whereas the treaty was set up to represent the whole war at the expense of all Greece.[60]

Isocrates, surely speaking for many Athenians, sees this as a capitulation to the old enemy, and a betrayal of the Ionian cities – Clazomenae among them:

> For he has accomplished what none of his ancestors ever could. It is agreed by both us and the Spartans that Asia belongs to the King, and he has taken such authoritative control of the Greek cities there that he has destroyed some and has fortified the citadels of others. All these things have come about through our neglect, and not through the power of the King.[61]

When Plato begins this dialogue with his account of the visitors from Clazomenae and makes its narrator an Ionian who is presumably back at home in Ionia, he may well be touching a raw wound. While Isocrates is aware of the political and reputational issues involved for Athens, Plato may perhaps be drawing their attention to a philosophical aspect of all this. The Clazomenean visitors arrived in Athens from the eastern extremes of the Greek speaking world, to hear λόγοι spoken many years previously by men who came from the western extremes of the Greek speaking world. Does Plato see the expansion of Persian power, and the associated threat to the cherished independence and prosperity of the Greek-speaking cities, as a threat to the development and spread of philosophy? Isocrates' great dream was a Greek speaking world politically and militarily united against the barbarians, with Athens at its head. Plato famously rejected the contrived division of the world into Greek speakers and barbarians.[62] Perhaps Plato is reminding us that all of these exchanges of philosophic λόγοι take place in a constantly changing political environment which also merits serious consideration – but not in this dialogue.

9 Conclusion

For those who might doubt the seriousness of Plato's purpose in the *Parmenides*, the introduction, in my view, constitutes a message τοῖς ἐντευξομένοις

60 Isoc. *Paneg*. 180, trans. Papillon (2004).
61 Isoc. *Paneg.* 137, trans. Papillon (2004).
62 Pl. *Plt.* 262d-e.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

that these arguments are to be taken very seriously. I believe that I have provided good evidence to support this claim in this chapter. For those who might judge the merits of this dialogue based upon their own understanding of the general coherence and argumentative unity of Plato's written text alone, I believe that the introduction directs all serious readers to an alternative approach, whereby 'we too take an active part in the argument'.[63] Perhaps, as Cornford expressed it, 'The gymnastic is designed for the students of the Academy. They are expected to compare the arguments of each hypothesis with those of the others and to find out for themselves the distinctions that must be drawn – in fact to go through the very process attempted in the present commentary'.[64] Perhaps Plato intends that his reader should heed the injunction of Plotinus: 'Plato has left "to us" the task of seeking and discovering such things, so long as we wish to be worthy of the name "Platonists"'.[65]

63 McCabe (1996) 7.

64 Cornford (1939) 130.

65 Plotinus 5.8.4, 52–54: *εἴασε ζητεῖν καὶ ἀνευρίσκειν, εἴπερ ἄξιοι τῆς προσηγορίας φαμὲν εἶναι*, as cited, in this context/connexion by Gatti (1996) 21. Here Gatti adds her note 43, which runs as follows: 'Cf. V.8.4.52-6. See Charrue (1978) 29'. (= J.M. Charrue, *Plotin lecteur de Platon*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1978).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

CHAPTER 14

The *Prooimion* and the *Skopos*

Proclus' Commentary of the Alcibiades I

Pauliina Remes

1 Proclus on the Role of *Prooimia*

Proclus is, one might claim, our main source for the Neoplatonic interpretative principles used in the exegesis for Plato. As becomes immediately apparent, however, he is by no means the first one to have opinions on these issues. Platonists had written commentaries since Crantor, that is, as early as the first generation after Plato's own time (Procl., *In Ti.* 1.76.2 ff.).[1] Even as regards the significance of the preambles, Proclus' predecessors had drawn attention to possible allegorical interpretations as well as to the impact that Plato's particular choice of persons made to the whole.[2] In enumerating possible views about the roles that Plato's preambles have, Proclus appeals to the interpretations suggested by his predecessors, classifying them, locating and elaborating his own view of the matter against this background.[3] Let us quote one of the main sources as regards the understanding of the preludes of the dialogues, in full:

> Ancient commentators have held varying opinions regarding the preludes to Plato's dialogues. Some have not condescended to examine them at all, saying that hearers who are genuinely interested in the doctrines must come with a previous knowledge of these preliminaries. Others do not take them as being random, but see their use in referring to moral attitudes, and take them to teach the structure for the problems addressed in the dialogue. Others demand that the interpreter bring the matter of the prologue into relation with the nature of the dialogue's subject. We

1 Dillon (1999) 207. For pre-Proclean views on preambles, see his immediately following pages, 208–210. For commentary tradition in general, the multiple works of Han Baltussen are useful. See e.g. Baltussen (2018).

2 It seems that Iamblichus had a vital role in the recognition of their significance, as is testified by Proclus *In Ti.* 204.24 ff. For his role in the overall development of the hermeneutical principles of the Neoplatonists, see Tarrant (2017) 27–44.

3 For the sources that Proclus may be using, see Sedley (2002) 140–149.

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> agree with the last group and shall begin by showing how the subject of the dialogue relates to the matter in the introduction. Not that we shall neglect the moral stances represented in the dialogue, but in studying any Platonic dialogue we must look especially at the matters that are its subject and see how the details of the prologue prefigure them. In this way we should show that each of them is perfectly worked out, a living being harmonious in all its parts, each of them separate, as Plato says in the *Phaedrus* (264c), and bring into harmony with this also what belongs to the outlining of moral attitudes. When the preludes are completely different from what follows, as in the dialogues of Heraclides of Pontus and Theophrastus, it offends every critical ear (Procl., *In Prm.* col. 658.33-659.23; trans. Morrow and Dillon, with some significant modifications).[4]

Proclus thus divides the earlier commentators' views into three main groups:

1) People who have not examined or commented them at all. This group would seem to divide, implicitly, into two groups, into scholars who consider them to contain just any (random) content not in any essential relation to the topic of the dialogue, thus unnecessary to read or comment upon, and into readers that think that the preambles contain mere preliminaries that every serious reader of the dialogue should already be knowledgeable about.
2) Readers who think that the usefulness of preambles lies in presentation or sketching (*hupographeo*) of moral attitudes or duties (*kathekonta*). In Stoicism, where the term derives from, these concern the performance of actions that are appropriate for human beings.[5] This is a level of good acting below ideal, full intellectual virtue or goodness, and one available to less than perfect people. The idea of this interpretative principle is

4 Ἐπανιτέον δὲ εἰς τὰ προκείμενα, καὶ τοσοῦτον προσθετέον ὅτι τῶν παλαιῶν περὶ τῶν Πλατωνικῶν προοιμίων διαφόρους δόξας ἐχόντων, καὶ τῶν μὲν εἰς τὴν τούτων ἐξέτασιν οὐδ' ὅλως καθιέντων (ἥκειν γὰρ χρῆναι ταῦτα προακηκοότας τοὺς τῶν δογμάτων ἐραστὰς γνησίους), τῶν δὲ οὐδὲ τούτων ὡς ἔτυχεν ἀκροωμένων, ἀλλὰ τὴν χρείαν αὐτῶν εἰς καθηκόντων ὑπογραφὰς ἀναπεμπόντων καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὰ ζητούμενα ἐν τοῖς διαλόγοις οἰκονομίαν διδασκόντων, τῶν δὲ καὶ ταῦτα πρὸς τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων φύσιν ἀξιούντων τοὺς ἐξηγητὰς ἀνάγειν, ἑπόμενοι καὶ ἡμεῖς τούτοις προηγουμένην ποιησόμεθα τὴν πρὸς τὰ πράγματα τοῦ προοιμίου τὰ προκείμενα φέρουσαν ἀνάπτυξιν. Οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ τῆς τῶν καθηκόντων ἀμελήσομεν ἐπιστάσεως. Δεῖ γὰρ ἐπὶ τῶν Πλάτωνος διαλόγων εἰς τὰ πράγματα βλέπειν διαφερόντως τὰ ὑποκείμενα τῷ διαλόγῳ, καὶ σκοπεῖν ὅπως καὶ τὰ προοίμια ταῦτα ἐνεικονίζεται, καὶ ἓν ἀποφαίνειν ζῷον ἐκ πάντων τῶν μερῶν ἑαυτῷ συμφωνοῦν, ἕκαστον ἀπειργασμένον, ὡς αὐτὸς ἐν Φαίδρῳ φησί, καὶ τούτοις συναρμόττειν, καὶ ὅσα τοῦ τύπου τούτου τῶν καθηκόντων ἐστὶ τὸ δὲ παντελῶς ἀλλότρια τὰ προοίμια τῶν ἑπομένων εἶναι, καθάπερ τὰ τῶν Ἡρακλείδου τοῦ Ποντικοῦ καὶ Θεοφράστου διαλόγων, πᾶσαν ἀνιᾷ κρίσεως μετέχουσαν ἀκοήν.

5 This is well argued for in Sedley's (2002) reading.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

that the actions and colloquial discussions, persons, and situations presented in the preambles contribute to our understanding of what is morally appropriate. The word is carefully chosen: it is not *katorthoma*, 'right action' 'virtuous action' or 'perfection', but a word that refers to the morality at the level of civic, non perfect virtue – the virtue of embodied, real human beings we witness in the dialogues. These same interpreters, or at least some in the vaguely same group, also seem to think that the preambles are relevant for the arrangement or structure (*oikonomia*) of the dialogue to come.

3) Some readers assess that what, in the dialogue, is inquired into must be related to the 'nature' (*phusis*) of the things discussed. This *phusis*, it seems to me, is contrasted with the arrangement or structure mentioned in the previous suggestion. Where the emphasis there is on the arrangement of the presented things in the dialogue – the structure of the written work – what is underlined here is the nature, character or constitution of the thing discussed, the object, phenomenon or theme written about.

Proclus dismisses the first group: preambles that do not have significance for the whole dialogue are stylistically worthless. What is in use is the principle of benevolence on the part of the commentator. The assumption, as the last lines testify, is that Plato could not possibly have done a stylistic blunder of leaving a part of a dialogue without proper function or role. Of the two remaining alternatives, Proclus contextualizes himself in the last group, by saying that the things in the preamble refer the subject or explanation (*anaptuxis*) of the dialogue. He then adds two important, although perhaps somewhat different ideas about exactly how the preamble relates to the topic of the dialogue.

One way of capturing the relationship is to say that the preamble portrays or represents, (*eneikonizo*)[6] the content of the rest of the dialogue. This is, while a metaphorical way to approach the issue, nonetheless quite a specific idea: the preamble presents, in another form, the same things that will be properly and directly discussed later in the dialogue. According to this idea, the preamble gives a preview of sorts, and while it may enrich our understanding of the dialogue's subject matter(s), it does not bring in any larger extra component.[7] The other way of capturing the relationship, one that is also metaphorical, is

6 According to Sedley (2002) 134, the word *hupographeo*, 'to sketch', 'to portray', seven lines earlier is already used by the Anonymous commentary on Plato's *Theaetetus*, and with the meaning 'to illustrate' or 'to portray' rather than merely 'to outline' or 'to sketch'.

7 Dillon (1999) 213 refers to *In Ti.* 1.29.31 (Diehl), in which Proclus mentions the Pythagorean way of introducing scientific instructions first through images or similitudes.

that the dialogue as a whole is like a living being (*zoon*), the unity of which requires the totality of its parts.[8] Harmony in a literary composition comes out of a similar structure, a whole with a harmonious collection of all its parts, each of them separate (*hekaston apeirgasmenon*). Both metaphors emphasise the importance of the preamble for the understanding of the whole dialogue. Both also employ ideas of holism. A picture, a portrayal or a Gestalt presents simultaneously, in a unitary vision, a complex whole of parts. A living being is a collection of functionally differentiated parts, all of which are needed for the structure and actualisation of the living functions of the animal as a unit.

The latter metaphor, however, leaves open the possibility that rather than representing the unity to come in the later parts of the dialogue in a preliminary way – by, as it were, giving a possibility of acquainting oneself with the contents of the dialogue in an introductory manner – the preamble has its own role in the whole dialogue. It would thus not be a synoptic or metaphorical depiction or representation of the whole, but a proper part of that whole. While these two approaches may not be opposite in function, the animal metaphor covers cases where the preamble contains some extra, additional content not discussed elsewhere in the dialogue. By doing so, the animal metaphor allows Proclus, further, to say that in his interpretation, option (2) above is actually included in his interpretative scheme: the preamble can enclose content relevant for moral acting. Such content may be typical, or even exclusive, for the preamble rather than the main discussion of a dialogue. However, according to his third alternative, and the idea that it can encapsulate even the second alternative, the references to moral attitudes and actions in the every-day life situations introduced in the preambles do not float free of the remaining dialogue, but are connected to, or actually governed by, the real topic of the dialogue. As we shall see, Proclus is elsewhere explicit about the idea that a preamble can have not merely an illustrative, but also a complementary role.

2 Proclus on the *Skopos* and its Relationship to *Prooimion*

The passage we have carefully considered speaks rather freely of 'central topics' of the dialogue, with the terminology of *ta pragmata*, in plural rather than singular. This suggests a liberal stance as to how many issues can be the topic of one dialogue. However, talking about the *nature* of the discussed thing, in singular, possibly already points towards a central interpretative principle of

8 As Dillon (1999) points out, this view goes back to Plato's *Phaedrus* 264c.

the Neoplatonists expressed elsewhere: that of each dialogue having a single topic, *skopos*. That a dialogue has an aim, a fundamental central thesis or subject is an idea presupposed already in early commentaries (e.g. Anon. *In Tht.* col. 2). The Neoplatonists saw it as their task to determine, at the opening of a commentary, the aim, the usefulness, and the structure or division of the dialogue, as well as, finally, its position in the Platonic corpus.[9] Let us see the idea of the single aim introduced by Proclus in the beginning of the commentary on the *Parmenides*:

> After these preliminaries [the setting of the action, the personages etc.] there remains for us the necessity of finding the subject of the dialogue, and of seeing how all these elements are related to that single subject, as revealed by our argument. For all that we have said was said by way of preface to the dialogue and from the perspective of the theory of ideas, from which some of our predecessors, as I have said, have given it its title. For just as we must proceed upwards from sensible appearance to the intelligible cause, so we must ascend from the circumstances presupposed in this dialogue to the single purpose and the single end of the whole treatise, and relate to this, so far as we can, the other details – the persons, the occasion, the setting – that we have previously considered on their own account (Procl. *In Prm.* 630.15-28; trans. Morrow and Dillon).[10]

What Proclus has given before this passage is an allegorical interpretation of the elements in the preamble.[11] His first interpretation of its contents is already heavily Neoplatonic in tone – or as he himself says in the quote, it is directed to people that want to satisfy their desire for the realm of beings, the Ideas. He does not, then, proceed in a pedagogical way of starting with

9 See also Taki 2012, esp. 183–184, who points out that *Alcibiades* I commentary is particular in so far as Proclus not only argues for it, but seems to apply the *skopos* idea fairly systematically, through for example relating the conclusion of separate arguments within the dialogue to the overall *skopos*.

10 Ἀλλὰ περὶ μὲν τῆς διασκευῆς τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ τῶν τεττάρων συνουσιῶν καὶ τῆς τῶν προσώπων τάξεως καὶ ἀναλογίας πρὸς τὰ ἐν τῷ παντί, τοῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ περὶ τῶν ἰδεῶν λόγου βουλομένοις θεωρεῖν καὶ δυναμένοις τὰ ὄντα κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν ἕκαστα τάξιν, ἱκανὰ τὰ εἰρημένα. Τούτων δὲ ἡμῖν προδιατεταγμένων, ἀναγκαία λοιπόν ἐστιν ἡ τοῦ σκοποῦ ζήτησις καὶ ἡ θεωρία, πῶς ἅπαντα ταῦτα πρὸς τὸν ἕνα συνήρτηται τοῦ διαλόγου σκοπόν, ὃν ἂν φήνῃ ὁ λόγος· ὅσα γὰρ προείπομεν, εἰς τὰ προοίμια τοῦ διαλόγου βλέποντες εἴπομεν, καὶ τοὺς περὶ τῶν ἰδεῶν λόγους, ἀφ’ ὧν καὶ ἐπιγράφειν αὐτόν τινες, ὡς εἴρηται, τῶν ἔμπροσθεν ἠξίωσαν.

11 On Proclus’ literary theory and aesthetics more generally, inclusive of allegorical interpretation and many useful references, see Sheppard (2017) 276–289; Tarrant (2017).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

something easy, like ethical topics, and then advancing to interpret the preamble from a more demanding, metaphysical point of view. Rather, given that a reader interested in *Parmenides* is already a lover of intelligible, true being, Proclus starts with offering an allegorical reading that pleases such a reader. The second reading is thereby not more metaphysical or challenging in tone, but, rather, more disciplined as regards methodology: next one must determine the single aim or subject of the dialogue, and then to approach at the same preamble from the point of view of that topic, rather than with a freely allegorising mind.

Using such a strict hermeneutical principle, Proclus is bound to end up with a different interpretation of the meaning of the prologue. This combination of two profound but different interpretations is methodologically quite intriguing. As John Dillon points out, it seems that Proclus is fairly liberal as to the number of possible interpretations that a preamble may have.[12] This leaves open the perhaps modern idea that our inability to know Plato's exact intention allows us to offer several, perhaps even several equally good, interpretations of some sections of them. Such liberality need not go against the overall late ancient tendency of being dogmatic about the core of Platonic philosophy, but could concern merely the ways that these central ideas are visible in illustrative, metaphorical or allegorical parts of the dialogue.

Elsewhere, however, Proclus does seem to commit himself to a more rigid methodological idea, one according to which determining the *skopos* of the dialogue is a key to understanding the meaning of the preambles. Let us again look at the main source in full:

> The introductions to the dialogues of Plato accord with their overall aims and have not been invented by Plato for the sake of dramatic charm (for this manner of composition is far beneath the exalted mind of the philosopher) nor do they aim at mere accurate narrative, as some have considered; for it is neither plausible nor at all possible that every event or saying in the order in which they happen should be selected with a view to the single end aimed at by the works of Plato; but, as it is the opinion of our guides and has been fairly considered by us elsewhere, these circumstances depend on the general purpose of the dialogues: on the one hand the subject matter in fact or word is adapted to the immediate aim, while on the other hand what is wanting for the completion of the theory proposed is fulfilled; but all together, as in an initiation,

12 Dillon (1999) 217.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

> have reference to the overall achievement of the objects of enquiry. This, then, in my opinion, is the view which Plato offers us in this dialogue and I think he neatly shows through the very first verbal encounter the whole object of the composition (Procl. *In Alc.* I, 18.13-19.10;[13] trans. Westerink and O'Neill).

In this context, Proclus sets out, first, to deny two possible alternative functions of the preambles, in order to establish that they are significant for the main theme of each dialogue. He dismisses two alternatives derived from ancient discussions on literary criticism: it is not conceivable that the preambles are there for a mere dramatic charm, for that kind of composition is not suitable for the philosophical context and audience. The view dismissed is what Eratosthenes said about poetry, according to Strabo (1.2.3).[14] Homeric poems are not about learning, but about charming or leading the soul (*psuchagogia*). Proclus is not fond of the other alternative either, the one that Eratosthenes objected to, namely that preambles could be, like poetry, instructive (*didaskalia*), to contain some facts that were useful to learn. Eratosthenes objected to such facts – *historia* – in Homer, taking up examples that proved that, for instance, in matters of geography, Homer did not always get it right, presumably because he did not consider such correctness to be important for composition of the poems. In the case of Plato's preambles, the analogical facts would be the actual people, in the actual setting and discussion that took place, and the real order in which people spoke. Proclus now puts the principle of one *skopos* governing the content of the preambles into use: given that the preambles are significant or illustrative of the one main *telos* of the dialogue as a whole, it seems impossible that any course of real events or discussions could have served in this role. The possibility of the preambles being selected from within

13 Τὰ προοίμια τῶν Πλατωνικῶν διαλόγων συνᾴδει πρὸς τοὺς ὅλους αὐτῶν σκοπούς, καὶ οὔτε δραματικῆς ἕνεκα ψυχαγωγίας μεμηχάνηται τῷ Πλάτωνι (πόρρω γάρ ἐστιν ὁ τρόπος οὗτος τῆς συγγραφῆς τῆς τοῦ φιλοσόφου μεγαλοφροσύνης) οὔτε τῆς ἱστορίας στοχάζεται μόνης, ὥσπερ τινὲς ὑπειλήφασιν· οὔτε γὰρ πιθανόν ἐστιν οὔθ' ὅλως δυνατόν, ἅπαντα ἑξῆς ἀπὸ τῶν γεγονότων ἢ ῥηθέντων λαμβάνεσθαι πρὸς τὴν (19) μίαν τῶν Πλατωνικῶν συγγραμμάτων τελείωσιν· ἀλλ' ὥσπερ καὶ τοῖς ἡμετέροις δοκεῖ καθηγεμόσι καὶ ἡμῖν ἐν ἄλλοις μετρίως ὑπέμνησται, τῆς ὅλης τῶν διαλόγων ἐξήρτηται καὶ ταῦτα προθέσεως, καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐκ τῶν ὑποκειμένων πραγμάτων ἢ λόγων συναρμόζεται πρὸς τὸν παρόντα σκοπόν, τὰ δὲ τελειοῦται τῶν ἐλλειπόντων εἰς τὴν τῆς προκειμένης θεωρίας συμπλήρωσιν, ὁμοῦ δὲ πάντα καθάπερ ἐν τελετῇ πρὸς τὴν ὅλην ἀνάγεται τῶν ζητουμένων τελείωσιν. τοῦτο δὴ οὖν μοι δοκεῖ καὶ ἐν τούτῳ τῷ διαλόγῳ προτείνειν ἡμῖν ὁ Πλάτων τὸ δόγμα, καὶ καλῶς ἐπιδεικνύναι δι' αὐτῆς τῆς πρωτίστης ἐπιβολῆς τῶν λόγων τὸν σύμπαντα τοῦ γράμματος σκοπόν.

14 As already noted by Dillon (1999) 211.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

past, real events or histories is overruled by a commitment to the idea that the preambles are governed by the *skopos* of the dialogue. The preambles are carefully structured; they are composed with a view of the *telos* of the whole dialogue. They are not reports of real events that took place that the remaining text would then be forced to follow. The order of priority is the main dialogue and its *skopos* first, the construction and content of the preamble following upon it.

Proclus next establishes two ways in which the preamble is related to the *skopos*. First, the things discussed in the preamble, and the words used, are adapted or harmonised (*sunharmozo*) with the *skopos* of the dialogue as a whole. They are artistic inventions, the content and order of exposition of which serves the overall theme of the dialogue. Second, the preambles have a role in making the dialogue full or complete, and its theory or enquiry as complete as possible. The strong vocabulary connected to teleology establishes the *skopos* as not merely an overall theme, but an argumentative-philosophical *aim* (*telos*) that the dialogue serves (see also 10.17–19). It further contrasts, most likely, with the view that Proclus started with, namely the idea of a written work as something that merely charms or entertains: the content of these works, preambles included, are chosen for a philosophical purpose, rather than randomly anything that might please the listener/reader.

It remains to be seen in which way, if any, these principles are visible in the actual commenting on a Platonic dialogue. In the following part we shall examine one example, Proclus' commentary on *Alcibiades* I. Before going to this evidence, a more speculative word. There are two indications in these programmatic-methodological reflections that suggest that something in the internal *order* of the preamble might be significant for the order or content of the rest of the dialogue. In the very first passage, we saw the word *oikonomia* being used, and I suggested that it refers to the structure of the text, as opposed to the subject matter or nature of the things to be studied. There would, thus, seem to be two preoccupations, one with the nature of the things, the real object of study, and another with the order of exposition. In the last quote, Proclus seems to consider that the structure of the preambles and the order of the events narrated there are significant for the interpretation. The possibility that these events and discussions could have been real, is set aside on the grounds that in such a case their order would have hardly suit the dialogues' main discussion. This implies a certain belief on the function and role of the preambles: they do not just convey, in a general or evocative fashion, something missing or related as regards the topic of the dialogue. Whatever it is that they illustrate or add is done carefully.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

Even the order[15] of the events and the things said in the preambles might matter.

3 *Alcibiades* I: Self-knowledge

In the ears of a contemporary reader, *Alcibiades* I[16] might be said to be a dialogue without a proper preamble: we are not told the context in which the discussion of Socrates and Alcibiades takes place. No houses or outdoor settings mentioned, no festivities or homecomings from battles indicated, and no distancing through relating the dialogue as a second- or third-hand knowledge. In the *Alcibiades*, the discussion begins instantly, through Socrates addressing Alcibiades. Yet the first exchanges between Socrates and Alcibiades do not jump into the topic of the dialogue, self-knowledge, immediately. Rather, Socrates famously asserts himself as the one true lover among all Alcibiades' lovers and, moreover, the only lover who can be genuinely advantageous for Alcibiades and his political ambitions (103a1-105a4). There is, thereby, a kind of introduction, before the proper treatment to follow. Both Proclus and a later commentator, Olympiodorus, divide the dialogue into 3 proper parts (the *diairesis* of the dialogue): refutation (*elenktikon*); exhortation (*protreptikon*); midwifery (*maieutikon*; Proclus *In Alc.* 11.18–14.23, apparently following Iamblichus opinion; Olymp. *In Alc.* 11.5–7 Westerink). The first of these only starts at 106b, and thus we may think of 103a-106b as a preamble. Olympiodorus does not call it

15 Dillon (1999) 214 refers to a passage in which we see a sensitivity of Proclus towards differences between what is written in the sense of constructed, and what may have really happened, in the *Parmenides* (*In Prm.* 624.20 ff.), where four conversations are mentioned in the prologue, starting from a discussion that supposedly took place (συνουσία ἡ αὐτὰ περιέχουσα τὰ κύρια πρόσωπα καὶ τὴν πρώτην σκηνὴν τῶν λόγων) to three reports of it, the last of which is a narrative (*aphegematikos*) already far removed from the actual conversation. In the *Parmenides*, given that all of these are part of the setting written by Plato, they play a role of being like true realities (*he peri pragmata homoiotes*), allowing metaphysical interpretations. In our context, Proclus differentiates more simply between real conversations and different levels of reports of them, the latter of which need not follow the exact way in which the original conversation took place. It is thereby possible that when he elsewhere in the same commentary systematises different readings (our first text above), he again shows sensitivity to the designed structure of the work on the one hand and the structure of what could possibly really have happened on the other.

16 This dialogue was for a long time thought to be inauthentic, but has recently become a subject of renewed interest. E.g. Denyer (2001); Renault and Tarrant (2015). It should be mentioned that it never occurred to the Neoplatonists to doubt the authenticity of *Alc.* I.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

a preamble, but in Proclus' commentary it does become explicit that the parts that precede the elenchus are considered to be a *prooimion*.

The preamble of this dialogue, he says, is concise and compressed (131.15). Proclus even argues that the themes of the preamble are picked up by the author in the end of the dialogue, by recalling the discussions about love that the dialogue begins with: 'Therefore both the introduction to the conversation and the conclusion are full of the science of love, and all that lies between, affords very considerable indication of the setting of Socrates' activity according to this genre' (Procl. *In Alc.* 30.1–4.). Given the introductory role of the whole dialogue, as an invitation to, and motivation for, philosophising, Socratic-Platonic type of teaching is highlighted not only in the preamble but throughout the dialogue, to finally bring things together in Socrates' final words.

To understand how the preamble connects with the main dialogue, we need to know what the dialogue, according to Proclus, is about. The *skopos* is established in the very first sentences of the commentary:

> The most valid and surest starting-point for the dialogues of Plato, and, practically for the whole of philosophical consideration, is, in our opinion, the discerning of our own being. If this is correctly posited, we shall in every way, I think, be able more accurately to understand both the good that is appropriate to us and the evil that fights against it (1.3-7, trans. Westerink and O'Neill).[17]

In Proclus' interpretation, the topic of the dialogue is self-knowledge, and self-knowledge in a particular setting. First, Proclus is committed to the idea of levels of being, and brings strongly forward the idea that for beings on each different level, a different kind of perfection must be assigned. For example, the good of the soul is according to intellect, the good of the body according to nature, and the perception of gods is different from that of angels (1.9–4.2, esp. at 3.11–14). Proclus thereby locates the dialogue's concern over the right object of care of the self in his Neoplatonic, wider hierarchy of different things, in which the appropriate perfection of each kind of thing follows upon its nature and ontological status. As we can see, this is indeed first and foremost a theory about *kinds* of beings, and the value hierarchy that these beings form.

17 Τῶν Πλατωνικῶν διαλόγων καὶ πάσης, ὡς εἰπεῖν, τῆς φιλοσόφου θεωρίας ἀρχὴν κυριωτάτην καὶ βεβαιοτάτην εἶναι νομίζομεν τὴν τῆς ἑαυτῶν οὐσίας διάγνωσιν. ταύτης γὰρ ὀρθῶς ὑποτεθείσης καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν τὸ προσῆκον ἡμῖν καὶ τὸ τούτῳ μαχόμενον κακὸν πάντως που καταμαθεῖν ἀκριβέστερον δυνησόμεθα.

Perfection is governed by the nature of the type of thing in question.[18] However, according to Proclus the diversity of perfectionism goes even further: he talks about the good of each thing, and each partial soul (*psuchai merikai*; 3.13–14). There may, thus, be individual perfection, in accordance with personal characteristics of individual souls.

Second, from this hierarchy and diversity of the ways that perfection can happen follows therapeutic-epistemic consequences. Care of the self – another potential candidate for the main theme of the dialogue – depends upon recognition of the kind of thing to be cared for. Questions about the proper kind of care cannot be separated from questions about being or essence: knowledge of the nature of the object of care is the key to the right kind of caring. (This is a version of the Socratic commitment to priority of definition: you need to know the thing itself in order to say anything else about it). This has two-fold repercussions for what happens in the dialogue. On the one hand, Socrates has Alcibiades admit that the care for worldly possessions, for example, cannot coincide with care of his self, since these are the possessions that his body uses, and thus nowhere near his own nature. On the other hand, it makes, in the eyes of Neoplatonic commentators, understandable why Socrates starts approaching Alcibiades the way he does. The Socrates of this dialogue is no stingray or gadfly, but a very cautious man. This Socrates recognises that 'all youth is given to controversy and contention' and must therefore be cautiously approached, through conjectures rather than affirmation (23.14-18). Moreover, the method has to be one that appeals to his personal values and motivations, however flawed: his, even in comparison to his peers, remarkable power hunger and sense of self-contentment. A proper care of the soul of Alcibiades must take into account his particular kind of soul and its present condition, and adjust the beginning of the discussion to them. (Procl. *In Alc*. 28.10-11; made even more explicit by Olymp. *In Alc.* 24.13-14).[19]

In considering just by what means the dialogue accomplishes this, Proclus offers us yet another holistic metaphor, that of cosmos. This produces another kind of division of a dialogue, one not according to parts of the exposition, but a division into explanatory parts. Each dialogue is like a cosmos, possessing the parts that the cosmos possesses: the good, the intellect, the soul, the form (*eidos*), and the underlying substrate or matter (*hupokeimenon*; *hule*). Applied to the case of a literary work, this yields the following: the good is the aim

18 It has further been suggested that even Socrates is located in this hierarchy, as the *nous* aiding the *psuchê* of Alcibiades. Griffin (2014) 98–99; Ambury (2014) 111.

19 For the neoplatonic commentators on Plato's person-sensitive method, see Layne (2014); Renauld (2014); Remes (forthcoming).

- 978-90-04-44399-0

of the dialogue. In *Alcibiades* I, the *telos* is conformity to the divine. Intellect in this dialogue amounts to self-knowledge, and the soul-level is found in the demonstrations and syllogisms leading to that state. Form and substrate are the literary means that act as vehicles for these philosophical goals. By form Proclus wants to capture the literary style and everything connected to stylistic ability, and by matter the persons and moment (*kairos*) chosen as well as plot or 'play' (*hupothesis*; 10.4–13).

A couple of things stand out within this description of unity. In Proclus' system, we do not encounter an opposition between metaphysical and ethical, but a division between the literary work inclusive of its means, and the ethical-metaphysical *telos* for which it is written. The *explanandum* is a real written work, and the *explanans* can be roughly divided into three: its literary features, its content (here demonstrations and the topic of self-knowledge), and the ultimate *telos* that the whole aims at (here godlikeness). These aspects are hierarchically organised according to the general Neoplatonic order of priority, leaving the literary aspects a place on the lower levels of this explanatory scheme. Yet, the kind of holism advocated is inclusive. According to this passage, items that typically feature in preambles, like persons and particularised time of the discussion, are not mere additions or images of the whole, but a necessary part that makes the whole what it is. According to this division, they play a functional part in an explanatory scheme that produces the end result that is the literary work of this kind. Just as form needs matter for its (embodied) actualisation, so stylistic means need a substrate. In the dialogues, this substrate is the persons in the dramatised setting and moment chosen. But this literary composition would not be understandable, nor functional, if it did not serve an end, a purpose for which the dialogue is written. In *Alcibiades* I this is the self-ennobling kind of self-knowledge.

The preamble, then, is written in order to introduce the real meaning of the Delphic exhortation: to reveal us our nature (*phusis*). The dialogue will proceed doing so by using the demonstrative methods that philosophy enables (19.11-15). In Proclus' view, self-knowledge requires a two-fold reversion: first in and then up; or, towards our existing reality (or substance), and then towards our perfection (*huparxis*, *teleiosis*; Proclus *In Alc.* 18.4-7), already indicated in the preliminary portions of the dialogue: 'Now, the very introduction turns the youth toward himself, makes him scrutinise his pre-existing notions, and along with the reversion upon himself elevates him to the vantage point of Socratic knowledge' (19.15-18). Proclus restates a similar idea slightly later:

> Making this clear, then, from the introduction, the discussion on the one hand leads Alcibiades round from the life that tends outward to the

- 978-90-04-44399-0

> investigation of himself, and on the other calls him up from consideration of himself to the love of Socratic knowledge. For to long to learn the reasons for Socrates' behaviour is to become a lover of the knowledge pre-present in him (21.2-7, trans. Westerink and O'Neill).[20]

From the preamble onwards, then, the interlocutor is invited to think about himself. Socrates does not start, immediately, with any doctrine about the nature of our selves, or theoretical discussion on the proper object of self-care, but turns Alcibiades' attention from his political ambitions, his family and its fortunes etc. to himself. It is Socrates unrelenting love of Alcibiades soul rather than his perishing looks or fortunes that draws the youth towards his real self. Yet for the purposes of self-improvement, self-reversion understood as an inward turn is not enough. What is needed is also a turn towards the higher principles of goodness and knowledge. It is here that Socrates' person and behaviour, and not merely his pedagogical skills, becomes important. As a phenomenon, his unwavering love, love that flourishes even without recognition and reward, and one not primarily governed by bodily infatuation, is anomalous in the Athenian context. It is through understanding the reasons and intellectual commitments behind this behaviour that Alcibiades will come closer to understanding the object of self-knowledge and the whole hierarchy of being.

In all this, I wish to argue, Proclus is helpful to any reader of *Alcibiades* I. One may always disagree over the details, and complain about the Neoplatonic way of bringing hierarchies of being and value into everything. Yet he draws attention to undeniably interesting aspects of the preamble: the particularities of Socrates' way to appeal to Alcibiades; the Platonic commitment to priority of definition, as here freely applied to the priority of determining the object of self-knowledge before that of self-care; the gradual movement in discussion from worldly matters and aspirations to appeal to soul and intellect, to mention a few.

What Proclus does next may from our point of view seem less convincing, and certainly imports a lot from other dialogues, themes not directly present in the *Alcibiades* I. While there is no allegorical interpretation suggested – the interpretations of this preamble and dialogue happen fairly close to the text – Proclus sees even more hierarchies rising. Along the ontological and normative hierarchies, he suggests a hierarchical system of types of knowledge and

20 Ταῦτα τοίνυν ἐκ προοιμίων ἐνδεικνύμενος ὁ λόγος ἀπὸ μὲν τῆς ἑαυτοῦ κατανοήσεως εἰς τὸν ἔρωτα τῆς Σωκρατικῆς ἐπιστήμης ἀνακαλεῖται. τὸ γὰρ αἰτίαν ποθῆσαι μαθεῖν ὧν πράττει Σωκράτης, ἐραστήν ἐστι γενέσθαι τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ προϋπαρχούσης ἐπιστήμης.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

language. In short, the idea is to tease out all the repercussions of Plato's Divided Line (*Resp*. 6.509d-511e), together with some insights from the *Cratylus* (e.g. 397b), to the effect that there are things of which stable knowledge and stable language is possible, and language which must remain conjectural (*eikastikos*), because of the nature of the things discussed. The former revolves around the irrefutable and immutable objects of knowledge, the latter treats the things that come to be and pass away, and are therefore captured by conjectural expressions (21.9–22.15). The latter kind of language usage explains, for Proclus, partly the instances where Socrates appears less than secure of what he is saying. This insecurity is not a mark of indeterminate knowledge or ignorance on his part but of choosing the proper level of language to proper kind of things captured with it (22.15–23.7).

4 *Alcibiades* I: Love

Thematically, there is one theme that appears in the preamble that does not feature, really, in the dialogue to come, namely love. The dialogue starts with Socrates' announcement that he was the first man to love Alcibiades (103a1), instead of launching, immediately, the main theme of self-care and self-knowledge. In this respect, the preamble does introduce an ethical-therapeutic discussion that is missing from the later parts of the dialogue. This theme is different kinds of love, starting from the contrast of Socrates' own unwavering love for Alcibiades, and that of the suitors that he sent packing and that stopped pursuing him. One might therefore think that this corroborates the second reading in the division above, the one according to which the preambles treat *kathekonta*: what is an appropriate kind of love from an older man towards a youth? What could and should a youth expect from his suitors? How to deal with political ambitions, and what kind of help and guidance to accept?

Proclus devotes a lot of space to discuss love, but it must immediately be recognised that he does not see it separate either from the figure of Socrates and his activities, or from the *skopos* of the whole dialogue. As far as Socrates is concerned, Proclus divides his knowledge or science (*episteme*) into three: dialectics, elicitation or maieutic, and erotic. In this dialogue, he both manifests love, and practices philosophical argumentation and elicitation 'in a loving manner' (*erotikos*; 27.14–28.10).[21] Love is the power that takes the soul upwards, and the task of the teacher is to rouse this upward movement in the

21 See also Ambury (2014) 113.

- 978-90-04-44399-0

interlocutor. An exemplification of the particularly loving kind of Socratic care is his person-sensitive method: his argumentation is not unloving, but appeals to each person in a manner suited to that character, perfecting everyone according to his rank (28.10-11; 29.5-7).

Proclus goes then on, in following pages, to build a whole order or ranking of different kinds of love, in accordance to his system of orders of being. While we need not here engage in the details of Neoplatonic systematisation – not much of it seems relevant for the analysis of the original dialogue – it is crucial to note that love is not a phenomenon confined to the level of ordinary moral problems. As we know already from the *Symposium*, it extends to higher levels, and motivates knowledge seeking. It can – and should – be directed to goodness and beauty beyond the bodily. The higher kinds of love, moreover, are explanatorily prior: the lower level phenomena are not truly understandable without the higher levels. This means that any discussion on the level of *kathekonta* is not self-standing: it will remain incomplete without going to the true causes of embodied phenomena.

There is one hierarchical distinction, the details of which Proclus teases out elegantly, and which will ultimately show the connection between moral and political decision-making of ordinary kind, and the deeper metaphysical layers of the dialogue. This is the division into divine and vulgar love, as exemplified by Socrates and the suitors. Vulgar lovers are needy, dependent, and not self-sufficient, while divine lovers are self-sufficient and cause of admiration and amazement. Vulgar lover is interested only in bodily beauty and gratification, and loses interest, while divine lover continues to care, for he cares of the soul, not just of body. The former lover is fickle, the latter stable. One is constantly bothering, the other talking only when needed. The vulgar lover embodies everything that is indeterminate and disintegrated, while the divinely inspired lover stands for unity, goodness and true beauty (34.11–36.20). The last suggestion is as close to allegorical interpretation of the persons in the preamble as this commentary comes: Socrates is likened to the Unity and Goodness of the One, the suitors to disintegration of things material.

Now, all these contrasts (self-sufficient-dependent, unified-disintegrated, stability-fickleness) feature either explicitly or implicitly in the preamble, and they all point forward or allude to the central ideas forthcoming in the discussion on self-knowledge. The preamble, Proclus says later, embraces the reasons or causes (*aitiai*) of the whole conversation (131.16). It paves the road for the main division in the dialogue. This is the identification of the soul and its best part with the real self, and the body as the belonging of the soul, rather than a symmetric and equally important part of who we are. The main division leaves for the things that have to do with clothing and looks, as well as other

- 978-90-04-44399-0

worldly possessions and instruments a place one step further removed from proper object of self-care. They are mere belongings of 'the belonging' (the body; *Alc*. I 128a-e – to which the extant part of Proclus' commentary does not reach). In the *Alcibiades*, the understanding of this ontological division, and the dependency hierarchy it forms, is the source of right kind of self-care.[22] This division lies at the heart of the difference between vulgar and divinely inspired ways of loving, but is not presupposed by them within the literary composition. Proclus states that the hypocrisy of the vulgar lovers, and the way in which their love merely busies with images rather than real things, would be immediately revealed if one proceeded to see how the dialogue determines, later, the true nature of human being (*tis ho alethinos estin anthropos*, 37.1). The message of the preamble, then, is clarified by what is to come, and gets its explanation in the proper parts of the dialogue. But it does not presuppose knowledge of those issues for being compelling. And besides introducing these themes obliquely, it further enforces this distinction by showing its practical repercussions: a misidentified selfhood leads to flawed human relationships. In the explanatory analysis, however, the later introduced metaphysical distinction enjoys priority.

5 Conclusion

Proclus' understanding of what a *prooimion* is is relatively wide: it does not have to be a proper frame story in the sense of being clearly detached, by persons and location, from the discussion to follow. Given that he treats the first four Stephanus pages of the *Alcibiades* I as a *prooimion*, we may conclude that a *prooimion* presents a narrative or thematic discussion that sets it apart, by persons and location, but sometimes merely by content, from the following, longer discussion. He considers alternative ways in which this divergent content of a preamble is connected to that of the rest of the dialogue, underlying the idea that a dialogue is an organic unity, and the preamble a part of this whole. He is relatively liberal as to the way that preambles balance the whole – either by providing an image of what will come, or by complementing with ethical problems not discussed later in the dialogue. Importantly, both his own methodological remarks and his treatment of the *Alcibiades* I reveal that any complementary element that the preamble provides must not just add. The added element must be governed by the *skopos*, the ultimate aim of the dialogue.

22 I have argued for this elsewhere, see Remes (2013) 270–301.

There are at least two reasons for this: first, this is what it means to have a proper literary style. A preamble that discussed an interesting theme, but a theme entirely unconnected from what the rest of the dialogue is preoccupied with, one not governed by its overall purpose, would lack the kind of unity that is demanded of a literary work in this interpretative tradition. A good literary work has functional differentiation that forms a unity. Second, there is a good philosophical reason to connect the theme introduced in the preamble to what will appear later in the dialogue. Any proper treatment of moral problems, while apparently connected to the embodied lives and contingencies of the sensible-material realm, will happen by philosophical study of a deeper sort. A true moral development does not come about by following rules, or by learning by example (even when the example is as glorious as Socrates himself). It requires dialectical exercises, philosophical concept-clarification, and a grasp of some ontological truths, like the distinction between the real self, the belonging, and the belonging of belonging in the *Alcibiades* I. These are the true causes explanatory for the discussed views of love and ambition.

The preambles containing matter pertaining to *kathekonta* are governed by the philosophical aims of the dialogue. A dialogue can be understood through a unified explanatory scheme not unlike Aristotle's four causes, but one that is thoroughly Neoplatonised. In it, literary means as well as persons, settings and the plot are understood through the notions of formal and material causation, whereas the thematic content discussed by Socrates and his interlocutor(s) points to the vertical causes of the Neoplatonic scheme. On the lower level of the latter are argumentative strategies such as syllogisms, which connect to and function at the level of the soul. In the *Alcibiades* I, the purpose of these is to secure true self-knowledge, which connects to the level of Intellect. And the whole is governed by even higher, ultimate *telos* or good: that of godlikeness. These vertical causes take a shape of a real object through being materialised in a literary work with a carefully designed arrangement, and a substrate of real or realistic persons and situations. In this framework, *prooimion* forms a part of both a literary and an explanatory unity.

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